

**The Man Without Memories -  
Memories With Respect To  
A Gone Time**

## **Preface**

Memories, what are memories? Well, this possibly sounds like a stupid question, but not for me. I often asked me, how do other people remember on something? Sure, I have memories, but I always feel "separated" from them, there is no emotional connection. It's like watching a movie, like someone would have told you about something, and now you remind this conversation. And this is an immediate matter.

At home from work, reflecting about the workday, it's like standing on one side of a gab, looking at the other side. Thinking about something that happened yesterday, is like reminding something long ago, no longer with a direct connection to you and today. Elizabeth Grant, Lollapalooza 2017 in Paris, it's like an ancient past. Rival Sons, Red Hot Chili Peppers, I see a person there, I know that that's me, but I do have no emotional connection to him. There's a video on YouTube, you can see me, I can see me, but I see only a man, not more.

I have large gaps, the time before school, the school time, apprentice, school again and study. Later it's somewhat better. Sometimes, at night, starting to fall asleep, something pops up, suddenly. Always something trivial, but in any possible detail – this puzzles me whenever it happens. I'm puzzled that I even have a recollection of such a triviality, and then in such detail? But what shall this mean? That I could remember everything in total detail? But I know that some memories are definitely wiped out, or perfectly hidden. As said, it puzzles me.

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I have decided to structure this writing in chapters, thought to start with the first one, then the second one, and so on. However, I changed mind. Two reasons. First, it will be interesting to see, whether I will be able to dive into my memories, to see what all will appear. Yet, this can't be a process chapter by chapter. Therefore, all is opened up, I will start, let's see what will happen. But, there's a second aspect.

I have also decided that this has to become a pure autobiographical writing, everything written will be my memory to its best. However, are there limits? Well, to be fair, there are topics I do not want to talk about for the moment. Take the apprenticeship and suppose that I would write this chapter. There is one, maybe two, matter(s), it would be difficult to talk about. I would have to decide to write about it, to what extent, or to leave it out. But opening up everything means, that there's a lot to write now, that will be no problem at all. I can set the aspects which are difficult for me aside for now, can decide later. I think, there will be a time for everything, but not currently. And now?

Well, I will start, will jump around my life, plan to write some "introductions" for chapters with subchapters first – chapter 11! I will not sort them, some will be short, some long, it will be simply interesting for me, whereto this will lead. About some of the memories I have already written – My Dark Heart. Therefore, there will be, especially at the beginning, some repeating. But why not, and maybe I will find other words and aspect. The only thing I have to do is to begin. Therefore: Open the curtain, let the show begin! Or, as at the end of my first writing written:

This is my show!

## Chapter 1: My Birth in Heilbronn; 06/13/1965

Of course, like every human being, I have no memories regarding my birth. Nevertheless, I feel the urge to talk also about that day.

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ICU, have written about it already in my previous writing. It could have become a very short life, but it lasted at least fifty-eight years, at least nearly. Could I die tomorrow, maybe this night, never waking up again? Yeah, all would be possible, but at least in Portugal right now, it could be worse. I would like to die in Portugal, if not as a pensioner, then leastwise during a vacation there. But to be honest, I would prefer to do it as a pensioner.

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And then there are these moments in life, when nothing seems to make sense anymore, out of meaning. You have lost a lot of weight, but still overweight, halfway through. You have worked for years on your writing, expanded it to art, improvement, but still far away from self-defined aims. Some say, these are the fucking moments you have to pass through, they will shape you, will offer you new perspectives and possibilities. And to be honest, what else I could do, like a clock, ticktock, ticktock, ticktock? Until the clock will stand still.

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You're born, and your life will not last long, could be only a few days, even hours. But if not, for whatever reason, how long it will last, how will it be? And, should you ponder on such topics or simply live your life? Preferably, like society wishes? A good job, founding a family, a nice house with a car in the garage? Two kids, not necessarily more, but also not less? The German dream in my youth.

But, what if everything seems to fall apart, in a fundamental way? Do I really experience the moment, when all these SF nightmares begin? Will it be soon no longer possible to say what's real and what's not? Will earth start to become more and more inhabitable for humans? A small group living in boundless squandering, while the rest of the world suffers? The movie Zardos appears in front of me.

I learned the story of a songstress today, a cardiac surgery. Not frightening, in nearly all cases the procedure is successful and without risk - well, the problem with statistics. Even 99.99% not mean 100%. And maybe you are this 0.01%, most unfortunately, this means for you 100% - 100% dead, for instance.

But perhaps, even if the numbers are against you, that's also statistics. Being for 99.99% dead can mean 100% alive for you. Does all this have any meaning? Might be, would depend on you, I would say. But what appears to be obvious is, it definitely means not, that it would have any "higher" meaning. 99.9999..... and 0.0000.....1 are the magical numbers, not 42 or something else, because both so strong numbers have for you, as an individual person, not the slightest meaning. For you, as an individual person, only two numbers have significant meaning: 0 and 100.

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Thoughts, self-consciousness, and being aware of what surrounds you. Maybe only a product of evolution as an advantage, yet something perplexing. It confuses us, gives us possibilities, and makes us realize that at the end everything has a beginning, a period of development, and an end. Even the universe as such, and therewith all that's in it. And it will not be relevant if eternal

expansion, Big Rip, Big Crunch, or whatever, the universe as such has an end without living entities in it.

But is this not the ultimate contradiction regarding why we're so obsessed with leaving something behind? I would say that if something like intelligent life exists in the universe, then this life form has to be ancient. Compared to such a life form we behave like a life form on the stage of a roundworm.

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## **Chapter 2: Before School; 06/14/1965 until harvest 1971**

Well, not that I have no memories of that time, but not in a large number, vague often, like seen through a curtain, often fragmented, like a dream just right after waking up. There was something, but then it fades away, more and more. But part of this chapter is the second time that I nearly died, the drowning. Maybe not faded away, but suppressed. I'll try to collect some of this fragments in this chapter.

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My very first memory? Well, I would say, that I was a completely insecure person – well, my whole life. I have learned to cover it up today, and obviously, I can handle it somewhat better today. But it was extreme in my youth, I always doubted about everything that I did, about my person as such. I could not play by the rules, could not understand the rules, until today, feel them very often as boring and stupid. I was a very insecure youngster.

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I'm six years old at the end of this chapter, a person normally can remember events around his third birthday (between two and a half and three and a half years as an average). Even if I try, I have some safe memories connected to the next chapter, but this first six years? I find no fix point, cannot remember any birthday or suchlike, no family celebration, Christmas or so. At least I'm totally insecure, whether a vague memory is part of this chapter or not. I tend thereto that also this very vague memories belong to the next chapter. Whatever, even if I try, there is not one memory, at least so far, I could say: This happened definitively between 1964 and 1971.

I ask myself whether I can remember Willy Brandt, I meant to have seen him at this time on TV. But this is difficult and dangerous because, of course, I have seen much footage later and know him well. Helmut Schmidt, but he was chancellor from 1974 until 1982. No, the time until the mid-70s seems more or less lost. I would say that in this period the near drowning in a river belongs – I have never asked.

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Talking about what I cannot remember? I will not charge with this that it never happened, most likely it has, in one way or other, but I have absolutely no memories.

Children's birthday parties, I cannot remember one of it, not of mine, or another child's. But in a way this makes no sense, my best (only) friend in school? I can remember a fondue, but this was, in fact, around New Year – or. Or, was this his birthday? It's strange, I cannot find any hint of a birthday party in my mind.

A sidenote: I was never interested in my birthdays. Not only once I have nearly forgotten my birthday. A few years ago, my sibling called me and asked whether I would plan a dinner because of

my birthday, they would possibly stay for some days in France. I asked: My birthday? And she informed me about, that I would have birthday next week! Yeah, let's celebrate!

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### **Chapter 3: First School Days; harvest 1971 until summer 1980**

Just like the prior chapter, not much is there. More, but not that much. I had a friend at this time, especially during chapter 3.1. Later, chapter 3.2., we "alienated" more and more. He attended the grammar school, I "only" the main school. It's nearly impossible for me to say, to which year, maybe even chapter, a memory belongs. I will do my best to separate them, but it will not be possible in the end. The near killing belongs to this chapter. But even there I cannot say, to chapter 3.1, or 3.2.

### **Chapter 3.1: Elementary School in Bad Friedrichshall; harvest 1971 until summer 1975**

Elementary school, my sixth until tenth year of age. What to say about them? I have a few memories about the time in school, but I think that they all belong to chapter 3.2. I have no memories connected to the family, family life. It's a bit scary, maybe I will find some while writing this writing.

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One memory belongs definitely to this chapter – okay, summer 1975, after elementary school, before main school, summer holidays 1975.

We had been at the public swimming pool in Bad Friedrichshall, not sure who "we" had been. My sister in any case, but otherwise? But this is not relevant.

We rode home with our bicycles, not wearing much, I only flip-flops, no regular shoes. There was a steep hill, we had to ride it down, I had to ride as fast as possible and slipped with the left foot from the pedal. The foot got wedged between the pedal and the road surface, upside down, and got dragged so long over the street surface, until I managed it to stop the bike. Well, the upside of the big toe bled heavily, the scar is still visible.

A car stopped, the driver had maybe seen what had happened, and an older man started to help me. I'm not sure what he did – did he drive me to a doctor? Whatever, he asked me some questions, also about the school I would attend. I said that I would start with main school after the summer. Fine, he said, then we will meet again. He was the principal of the main school in Bad Friedrichshall and became my homeroom teacher.

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In school, I was not bad at school, but also not especially good. Better in scientific matters, not language. I was always interested in new things, curious about the world, started early to be interested in the moon and the stars at night. But also in plants and animals – shouldn't I have been better at school?

I had my problems with this kind of learning, like in schools. I liked reading books, but had not so much of them around me. An interesting program on TV, sporadically, but mostly rubbish. I'm not here to blame my teachers, but until today, I'm not happy with the way they present their subject. It all could be so fascinating, but school is like a factory.

And then I had my issues therewith, socializing with others. And the always present insecurity. Always doubting always about me, even when I noticed that I can do it, but it did not help. In a way, I liked it to be at school, but often it was very stressful. I was one of these boys, mostly not noticed by its environment. The first time I started to read Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison, of course many years later, I thought: Yeah, I know this feeling only too good. Have I to say that I can only remember, what's not true, sitting always alone at the last school desk?

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I would say that this memory belongs to this chapter. A summer, long holidays, together with my friend. I had one friend, we were often together, at least at this time. I have no idea how we met, at what age, under what circumstances. But we were very close friends for a time, also in this summer. We had "junk bicycles" in this summer, the source was his family, I cannot remember exactly. Two old bicycles, but still good enough to us them on every dirt track, it couldn't be too dusty, rough, or muddy for us, we loved it driving everywhere in all weather. Well, it was not assumed, and it happened, none of the bikes survived the summer, an unburdened summer. Details? I have none, only the image seeing me and my friend riding like hell. Accidents, falls? Of course, but we were boys, no time for yammering!

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Tripsdrill, yeah, Tripsdrill. I cannot remember much that happened at that time, especially not regarding family activities. But I know that we once were in Tripsdrill, an amusement park, the oldest in Germany. I know it because I can remember that we visited the Altweibermühle, but more I do not know. When was I there with my family? I was young, in any case, but more I do not know. Yeah, more I cannot remember.

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### **Chapter 3.2: Main School in Bad Friedrichshall; harvest 1975 until summer 1980**

Main school, my tenth until fifteenth year of age. What to say about them? A bit more than regarding 3.1 I would say, but the family life seems to be still an empty black box. Let us see how long the chapter will become.

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My youth overall? "Unburdened" I would say, especially 3.1, "unaware" would be another word I should use, especially 3.1. Later, 3.2., I noticed that there is more, but these were other times. No Internet, it was not easy at this time to gain information. Interested in the stars, art, music, movies? Yeah, no Wikipedia, no YouTube channels, not many books available. One scientific program on TV - Querschnitt(e); Hoimar von Ditfurth and Volker Arzt, 1971-1989 – but only one TV, and you had to go to bed early. Well, my parental home? No really political, and no art and science at all. It's not meant as a blame, it was only sad for the young boy, not able to satisfy his growing desires for art and science. Yeah, has been a different time, and I do not miss it, sitting in a bakery in Portugal, with my laptop, online, writing this text.

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Who raised me? Not such an easy question. In the house lived my parents, my sister, and my

grandmother (maternal). It was, in fact, her house. My grandfather died when I was four, and I have absolutely no memories at all regarding him. My father and my mother worked. Coming home from school, my grandmother was always at home and had cooked something. Of course, it was different at the weekends, but my grandmother ran the household. Pondering about it, it's always the same, I have no distinct memories, about some single events I will later talk about. But I cannot remember coming home from school - what then? She was there, of course, but.....? I cannot separate the years or chapters, all vague behind a curtain. For so many years, my grandmother was such an important person in my life, so little is left and nothing is distinct. Might it be that this helps me not to despair because I always lose contact with everything that's past? It seems so.

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My first love, or maybe not? Okay, there was this other woman, but I think she was number two. The first was my English teacher! This is not new, have already written about it, as well as about the fun fact that English was the subject I was worst at, by far!

She had a funny name. A character from a children's book and a bird of prey, and I liked her long skirts. That she liked sitting on her desk, and I also think her shoes? Because, to be honest, I cannot remember much. She was young, maybe her first job after studying, had long hair, and she was not tall. I cannot remember much of her face. At last, I have no real memories at all. But I loved her, I liked being in her class, and I learned not much. And, the love ended abruptly.

It was a festival at school, and I have no idea why, but she was there with her boyfriend. I doubt that she was married. And, he was around her age, tall, and good-looking, and I realized that it was somewhat silly to be in love with her. But hey, there should be this other woman!

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The Other Woman - in my case, it was Aude Landry. The German TV showed in December 1978 the four-part series "Die Abenteuer des David Balfour", based on two novels by Robert Louis Stevenson: "Kidnapped" and "Catriona". And it was with Catriona, played by Aude Landry, that I fell in love. Well, it was not that easy in those times, four parts on TV, and this it was. No Internet, no media centers, no YouTube, no streaming.....it was a hard time for such love. But my heart was totally hers, for some time.

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Again, I'm not really sure whether this memory depends on chapter 3.1 or chapter 3.2. Because I have put the last memory (Tripsdrill) in chapter 3.1, let's put this memory in chapter 3.2.

My parents worked hard and both made it in their careers. Not to the highest ranks, but nevertheless, our economic situation improved over the years. The cars got bigger, and one day it was time for a vacation abroad, and more importantly, we would use the airplane. Spain, Lloret de Mare, a tourist hot spot for package tourists. But hey, I was at the sea - the first time?

I still have to write about my summer vacation with my friend at school at the North Sea. But, do not ask, was this earlier or later, I do not know! Thus, I cannot say if this was the first time at the sea, in Spain, or the second time. Whatever, I still have some memories.

I liked the view of the sea, water until the horizon. I dived a bit, saw fish under the water, surrounded by water. I have no idea if I was at that time aware of my near drowning or not - or the near drowning happened later? I blocked out the memory of the near drowning, but I have no idea when it happened, but the blocking it out lasted for a very long time, many decades.

My parents had bought me a diving goggles, and I had them with me as my father fished on a rocky part of the beach. Well, the diving goggles fell into the water, we were above the water sitting on the rocks, maybe three yards, the surge was strong, and I looked at the disappearing diving goggles. I hear my father shouting, I think I moved, I was at least confused about the sinking diving goggles:

Do not jump! They are away! We will buy new ones!

I'm uncertain if I wanted to jump, it was high. My father tried to catch the diving goggles with the fishing rod, but unsuccessfully. Well, this is not my only memory regarding this vacation. It could be that I should write about the nurse or the sombrero, but the time at the sea and the drowning diving goggles are the clearest memories I have about that vacation. And?

Well, I loved the flying, aviation, the next time would be years later, as an eighteen-year-old, London.

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All Those Places - I own a small casket, made of silver, maybe, with red fabric inside. In this small casket, some badges are stored inside. They were made to be fixed to your walking stick to show all the places you have been. It's interesting, there are twelve badges in all: Rheinfall, Kötzing, Klausenpasshöhe, Lechspeicher, Kleinwalsertal, Zillertalbahn, Trifels, Schattwald, Breitachklamm, Pfänder, Rheinfall again, and Switzerland. I know that my parents bought me a walking stick as a child and that they bought these badges, but I never fixed them to the walking stick. The point?

Well, this means that I was at all these places as a child, together with my parents and my sister, but I have no memories at all. Not one of these places means anything to me. So, not that my parents did not do something with us children, but I have no memories. There is something with Italy, and a pilgrimage site, but I have no real idea about it.

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One of my biggest wrongdoings belongs to this chapter. And what sucks most is, that the reason therefore was simply my insecurity, my shyness. Whereby, it's such a stupid story, and I need some time to prepare myself to write it down. This is the preparation. The story as such, possibly tomorrow.

Okay, not the next day, but.....we got a new teacher. He was raised in the eastern part of Germany. The GDR, German Democratic Republic. Some called it a socialist nation, I always called it a communist dictatorship. I cannot remember when he moved to the western part of Germany, but he had been an apprentice in the GDR, a carpenter, if I'm not mistaken. One way or another, he had managed, now living in the FRG, the Federal Republic of Germany, the democratic part, to become a teacher. Well, it was in the seventies, still during the Cold War. I'm still surprised that they let him become a teacher, especially in the deeply conservative state of Baden-Württemberg.

He was not an examined teacher, in his early thirties, I would say, it was his teaching practice as he came to us. He was a different teacher, I have to talk about it later in this chapter. He motivated me to read books, but this is not the topic for today.

So, he had to take his second state examination after some time, his final examination to become ultimately a teacher. He had to teach, and examiners in the back of the classroom would evaluate his performance. I have no distinct memory, but this was not the first time for us. I think that we had already participated in a first state examination, a young female teacher. So, nothing new for us, he was a respected teacher, and we were motivated. And, after the examination, we all had the feeling: It all went very well.

So we were all shocked, as we got the message that he had failed, that we would never see him again, that he had failed totally! How could this happen? This could not be meant seriously, we thought. We decided not to accept this, that we had to do something. We thought that all this happened because he had not acted like "they" thought that he would have to - more about it later in this chapter. So, we decided to do something, and I was among those. Yeah, I was among those. Well, of course, this is not my misbehavior, but this is the prologue.

Yes, we decided to do something, to start a signature campaign. We would go to our parents and ask

them to sign a protest saying that this teacher has to be allowed to teach. And it functioned well. Three of us, I among them, walked to the houses of the parents and asked for a signature. And it functioned well. The parents loved our effort and all signed the protest. At the end of the day, it became clear that I would take the list with me, we hadn't been at my parents' house. I would bring the list the next day, so we could continue. My problem now was, that I did not dare ask my parents. I was able to walk with the others to other parents, I also talked and asked, but I did not dare ask my parents. I hadn't had the list with me the next day, and I said that I had had no real chance to ask. This also happened the next day, and I have no precise memories, but the effort to help this teacher died with me because of my inability to ask my parents. This is so much more shameful because this teacher has done so much for me. But about that later.

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#### **Chapter 4: First Apprenticeship to a Cook in Neckarzimmern; 08/01/1980 until 07/16/1983**

The first large break in my life, the first that I felt as such. I no longer lived at home, not that long after my fifteenth birthday. I lived on a (medieval) castle now, the castle where they had jailed the Götz von Berlichingen, Burg Hornberg in Neckarzimmern. My mother fetched me at my days off, one and a half days (!) as a cook at this time, I spent those days at home. The rest of the days I lived on a castle now. It should become no easy time. I had to realize that I was not interested in topics others were so much interested, I even heard other music. I should meet Coney Island, not everything was bad.

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I think that it was at the end of my second year of apprentice, maybe in the third. The sous chef told me in a conversation that his first thought was, as I began my apprentice, do we hire also little boys now. Well, he wasn't wrong, and he told me it because, no longer thinking that I would be a little boy.

Well, until today, I have the feeling from time to time to be a little boy, I perhaps simply wish me from time to time to be a little boy. The beginning of the apprentice was a painful cut in my life, the first, perhaps the only in a way, in any case, the most painful.

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I started my apprenticeship right after turning fifteen, and ended it right after turning eighteen. I have no memories of birthdays sixteen and seventeen, but I know that I celebrated my eighteenth birthday all alone, at the medieval castle, watching the stars.

I do not say that I was sad about it, but it was as it was. As I mentioned previously, I was never much interested in having a date of birth.

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What I can remember quite well is the day my mother drove me to the medieval castle for the first day of my apprenticeship - she cried. I asked her why, and she answered: Because I think that this will be the day when you will leave forever. Well, things developed quite differently, but of course, this was not obvious at the time.

Yeah, she believed that I would never live in this house again. Maybe being at home on a day off or so, but never again as her son. And? Well, I live here again and still, and she is no longer. I can remember her tears very well, not much is that clear to me, in my memory. The love of a mother.

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## **Chapter 5: First Job in Ludwigsburg; 09/10/1983 until 02/28/1987**

Ludwigsburg, well, it had not been that easy to find a job after my apprentice. Not because I had bad school certificates - quite on the contrary - or a bad employer's reference - quite on the contrary. The problem was that, still at this time, every young man in Germany had to do military service. And of course, just turned eighteen, I had not so far.

I had several job interviews, but all were skeptical about, how fast I would have to join the military. Well, it was Ludwigsburg then, where I got my first job after my apprentice. And this should be significant for my further life.

First, it lasted, in fact, over three years until I got drafted. And then, the first time in a city with many opportunities, and only a short ride with the commuter train until Stuttgart. But I was still this person, always doubtful, insecure, but now alone in a city, earning my own money, it should become a strange time. A new world opened up, but I still found nobody, to talk about it all.

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What to start with? Libraries, art galleries, Cinemas,.....? Or maybe nightlife and prostitutes? Well, have written already about all of that. Ludwigsburg was the first time, to be really away from home, to get confronted with the real life, no longer on an ancient castle, or at home at days off. In a way, in Ludwigsburg my life began, the first time in contact with original artworks, I could do with my spare time whatever I wanted. I was eighteen years old, and I tried to get some order in all those different impacting impressions that I discovered over those years in Ludwigsburg. In a way, I have not managed it until today. Strange years, but also sad years, so much more would have been possible. But not for me, it yet was already a little "act of heroism" for me to enter the State Gallery in Stuttgart, or, to sit down in a café at the Feuersee (Fire Lake) and ordering a coffee. Yeah, so much more could have been possible, in theory, as always in my life.

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Ludwigsburg, an interesting city, and Stuttgart, only a short ride with the urban train. The library in Ludwigsburg was important, very important, and the galleries in Stuttgart. But, there was another "institution" - "2001". Yes, Stanley Kubrick, named after his famous movie. But what was "2001"? Well, that's not so easy to say.

It was for me a place to buy cheap books and CDs, to discover every time something new. Especially the cheap CDs were fascinating, but also the books. "2001" bought remaining stocks, and sold them, at a time, this wasn't that common as today. Orientated to the left, one could buy the complete Marx for a few Deutsche Mark, but also a lot about art, for instance. And every day new books and CDs arrived, it was a crazy shop in a way, but fitted to that time. Have I to say that this shop is no longer? Yeah, years of discovering.

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Cinemas, an essential element in Ludwigsburg. Have already written about my first movie that I saw in Ludwigsburg, two time in a row the same movie – Flash Dance(!) – seemed the best alternative at the end. But Ludwigsburg also offered my first time in a porn movie theater – have written about also that in advance. Taxi Driver, not sure whether I had seen this movie already, Travis and Betsy watching a porn movie in a cinema. In Stuttgart, at this time, a porn movie theater

right opposite the train station. I think that I pondered about Travis and Betsy while sitting there. Whatever, the cinema in Ludwigsburg was a wonderful cinema hall, one in the perfect old style, and it was interesting to sit in there, mostly with not many other "moviegoers". It's a wonderful art house cinema today. Very different from the one in Stuttgart, it resembled very much the one in Taxi Driver. Shabby, strange "audience", many in the back rows. The movies? Well, no Internet at that time, quite the beginning of video cassettes, it aroused me not much.

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## **Chapter 6: Military Service Tauberbischofsheim; 04/01/1987 until 06/30/1988**

Military service, military service was still mandatory in my youth, for every young man, contrary to today. But it was also the time where not necessarily every young man had to fall in duty finally. Every young man got mustered, but then.....it was a time when the German army got shrunk, and they did no longer need every young man for service anymore. The problem was, that between mustering and duty a longer time could pass by, as it happened in my case, therefore my job in Ludwigsburg lasted that long. I had simply to wait until I had to do my military service. But finally the day came.....

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Yes, I thought about enlisting for four years for a time, the time of mustering, the time becoming eighteen, 1983. Not because I was attracted by the military, but I thought that I could catch up on higher education during that time. I have to say that this was a very different time than nowadays. Military service was mandatory at this time, but no one thought that the German army would ever be on duty again. Fighting, in other countries, helping by natural disasters of course, but at war? You had to serve, and you did it, unless you were near the peace movement, then you became a draft resister. But this was not interesting for me - and hey, I was a cook. I would serve in the kitchen, not much a matter. But it lasted three years until I got drafted, and I was no longer interested in to enlist for four years. And, not at last, serving was no good time, I was not "made for military service". Years later, chapter 7.2, Second Gulf War, Bush senior, I would refuse military service as an afterthought. However, this is another story.

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Let's confess,  
I was a lousy soldier!  
The best illustration?  
They stole my rifle two times!

Okay, not really, at least not the way, that it was lost. The first time was afield, we had to bivouac for a night. I have no memories of the details. But, as I put my rifle for a moment aside, a big mistake, as I wanted to hang it over my shoulder again, it was no longer there! I reported it to the head of the bivouac, I have no idea what rank he had, I had my problems with learning the ranks, I got it back. Well, but only after a severe indoctrination that you never every was allowed to let your rifle just for only one second unattended. But this was only the first time! The second time! We had been on the shooting range, I had hit all aims!, and it had been muddy. Back in the barracks, we had to clean our shoes in front of the building where we were housed, a place with several water taps. I had one right to the wall, the rifle over the shoulder nerved me, I

lent it against the wall. After I had cleaned my shoes, the rifle wasn't longer there!

Well, I walked to the office, reported the loss, knowing that they had grabbed it, and I got it back a second time. Of course, not before I got a sharp rebuke, and the advice that the military and I weren't compatible. And I, in my mind, agreed with this insight totally!

\*

At the beginning of your military service, every new soldier had to do a fitness test, which includes some rounds on the cinder track, for instance. The same at the end of your service. The reason? Well, someone told me, that this was that they could say to you: Look, at least you're now, at the end of your service, much fitter as at the beginning. My problem? At the end of my military service, the results of all exercises, were worse than at the beginning! Why? Well, I had spent my military service by cooking in a mess, divided into two parts, one for officers, one for petty officers. I had working times like a cook outside the barrack, no muster in the morning and suchlike as all the others, I just stayed in my bed. And when I entered the barrack room in the evening, all the others were already in bed by now. Overall, it was effortless cooking, just like in a restaurant, the weekends we had most to do, but also much spare time. And I started to eat, and to gain weight, and after the months serving in the military I was less fit than at the beginning! Does this tell something about the German military, at that time?

\*

## **Chapter 7: Further Education; 08/17/1988 until 05/23/1992**

I started to catch up on higher education after my time in the military. The idea was the following. I had decided to attend a college of hotel management to go on in my cooking career – Heidelberg was most interesting. This would be possible even with my, in Germany lowest, school graduation. An apprenticeship in the restaurant business was the minimum requirement. But, one could get the next highest school graduation, if expanding your courses somewhat, with an expanded final examination. We have three school graduations in Germany: Hauptschulabschluss (secondary modern school qualification; CSE); Realschulabschluss (secondary school certificate; O-level); and Abitur (high-school diploma; A-level). I had the lowest, more or less equal to CSE. I could get therefore the next highest graduation, more or less O-level, but this would give me not much advantage. But would I attend with O-level, then I could get the A-level. Could I get the O-level first and then attend the college of hotel management in Heidelberg? Yes, in Heidelberg would be a good opportunity, the Marie-Baum-Schule! One year, full time, then I would have the O-level. College of hotel management, and I would have the graduation "fully trained hotel clerk" and the A-level, then I could do everything. This was the plan, but all developed very differently, as so often in my life. The next chapters will be about this development.

### **Chapter 7.1: Middle School in Heidelberg; 08/17/1988 until 07/30/1989 Marie-Baum-Schule**

Heidelberg, dream of every American. Okay, Heidelberg has its nice aspects, but also some terrible ones. At least downtown, far too many tourists, especially in summer. Sorry, but Japanese tourists can simply be nerving. And the tourist shops with their garbage? One year at school in Heidelberg, full time, but at last I didn't live there, even that I had planned so. I commuted every day, from Bad Friedrichshall to Heidelberg and back. Why? One of the biggest disappointments in my life.

\*

Books were always a crucial part of my life, and I developed the plan to move to Heidelberg and to job in a bookshop. To earn some money on the side, to finance the room. I traveled to Heidelberg and walked from one bookshop to the other. I ask, whether I could work for them while being in school in Heidelberg. The result was devastating! In one bookshop they nearly booted me out, in a Christian bookshop they were very unfriendly. But, after a while, I found a bookshop where they were broad-minded. I had a conversation with an older man, the shop owner, and he told me that he would check how he could include me in his team. I should come back in a few days.

Well, I was thrilled while driving home, using the train, and returned a few days later. But, he told me then, that he had found no good way to include me in his team. He would feel sorry, but.....I drove home very disappointed. My plan to move to Heidelberg was dead, I commuted.

It would have been interesting to live in Heidelberg during that time, it had influenced my life in any case. I became, ten years later, a skilled bookseller. But yeah, Koester's Akademische Buchhandlung, it could have become a distinctive time.

\*

School essays, a very fascinating subject! It was strange in Heidelberg. During that year, all my school essays got read aloud in class - the teacher (schoolmistress) obviously loved them. I saw this as a bit scary. Not that I found my works lousy, but this was somewhat exaggerated, I thought. It's very fascinating how much your school grade depends in such subjects on the taste of the teacher. I know why I like subjects like mathematics, physics, or biology much more.

\*

## **Chapter 7.2: Grammar School in Stuttgart; 08/13/1989 until 05/23/1992 Kolping-Kolleg Stuttgart**

Three years, full time, but I did not move to Stuttgart, I commuted every day from Bad Friedrichshall to Stuttgart, Bad Cannstatt, and back. Later I would live in Bad Cannstatt for a certain time, but not now. And as in Heidelberg, it would have been better to move to the city, but I didn't.

Kolping-Kolleg? Adolph Kolping, lived from 1813 until 1865, and was a Catholic priest – wow, Peter, you and the Catholics? Well, that was a funny story, a story of misunderstanding.

\*

I sat in the office of the principal, to get some information about the school. I was not sure about whether this school would "fit" to me. A larger, older, stone building, with a small church aside. I asked something like, what "role" the Catholic belief would play in the school, and mentioned the church outside. I do not know why, but the principal obviously thought that I would ask because of being religious. He said something like that, yes, there would be a church on the school campus, but he would have to confess, that religion would play no other role in this school than in any other school. There would be no joint prayers or so.

Well, for a moment I was surprised and insecure, he had misinterpreted my question totally. I pondered on whether I should tell him that I had feared that religion would play a substantial role in this school, and that I was relieved now. He said something like, that this school would be open for every confession. I thought, well, also for agnostics or even atheists? But I did not say it loud, but

knew now, that this school would be interesting for me. And I have to say, it became three "calm" years, compared to other chapters.

\*

It might sound strange in a way, regarding the fact to be born in Heilbronn, raised nearby. Heilbronn, the "Waldheide", a US Army base with nuclear weapons. Many demonstrations, the peace movement, but I never anticipated in one. But in these days, the Second Gulf War, students discussed whether they should join a demonstration in downtown Stuttgart – during the regular school periods. Would it be allowed or not? Teachers and the school administration got asked. And if I'm not wrong, they pointed out that it would not be allowed and that it would be absence without permission. On the other hand, we would be all adults, many had already learned a job, we should be able to decide for our own. Most of the students drove downtown, so I, my first demonstration!

\*

School essays, a very fascinating subject! It was strange in Stuttgart. I could not tie up my successes in Heidelberg. My teacher (schoolmistress) had always some problems with my essays. I often found notes that she had written on them, telling me that she was not very impressed by my work. Okay, I got no bad grades, but compared to Heidelberg? On an essay dealing with a work by Heine, she commented that: Before you start flying high, what about such a trivial thing like the argument of the poem? I walked to her and said: Well, if you are not knowing the poem, you better should not read my essay. What do I have to say? We did not become friends.

\*

## **Chapter 8: Study; 07/23/1992 until 09/30/1996**

Wow, I was the first in my family attending the university, but human sciences (liberal arts)? Yeah, I observed the stars, was member of a public observatory, board member even, as my mother said as I told her that I would study human sciences: Well, I thought you would study physics. No, no physics because my heart belonged to art.

\*

Making a career? I was at a point, not only now, where one could say: Why has he not used this opportunity to make a career? Well, I would say because I was never interested in "making a career", being in the spotlight, pretending to be something special, or owning status symbols. And this is so until today.

It would mean something special to me if many people read my writing, or whatever art I make. But my person as such, not very important. This might be my cardinal fault, not being narcissistic enough, not thinking that I'm the best, or at least pretending it. But if this is the case, then I don't give a shit about it. I'm who I am, and I dream about becoming the old man sitting at the ocean, watching the ships come and go.

## **Chapter 8.1: Philipps-Universität In Marburg; 07/23/1992 until 02/19/1993 Art History; Philosophy; Psychology**

The Philipps-Universität in Marburg, a very honorable university, especially regarding art history. The big name was Wolfgang Kemp and the keyword "Rezeptionsästhetik" (aesthetics of reception, reader-response criticism). Well, I never attended a class of him, and in the end it was the name and personality of Peter Bieri what I took away with me, leaving Marburg soon after again.

\*

I, as a member of a students' fraternity? Hardly likely, or. Well, at least I visited one as I searched for a room to stay in Marburg.

I stayed in a boardinghouse in Marburg to search for a room while studying, and it was not that easy to find one – well, Marburg is a real university town. And I have to say, I have forgotten the real circumstances, I think that I saw a notice at the University, I also rang the bell of a frat house.

I'm confident that the notice was different from others, in Marburg there are of course many fraternities, and I thought something like: Why not, I haven't to say yes. So, I rang and they showed me the place. It was important for them to stress, that they would be different from the other fraternities around, more left, of course, no fencing fraternity, suchlike. And I have to confess, for a moment, I pondered, but then. The ancestors (old boys) came from time to time, to celebrate, there you had to wear your colors, normally not, but occasionally, suchlike. I had this voice that told me, don't do it, look for something else. Was nice to see it once, this obviously more moderate version – did they accept women? – but therewith was enough. No, Peter, this is not your world. I found another room to stay in the end, and it was one of the worst disasters in my life.

\*

Peter Bieri, he impressed me with his nature, manner, it was nice listening to him. I often thought to say something, participating actively in one of his seminars. But, hey, it was me, I never dared to say something. A pity, but I was always this insecure boy, always felt uncomfortable if too many people looked at me - apart from when giving a talk.

\*

A good illustration of my person? The university in Marburg is famous, among others, for its cast collection of antique statues, as one of the high-light the world-famous statue of the Nike of Samothrace. And hey, I studied art, and therefore I was interested in them. I knew in which building they should be, but I did not find them. Well, where's the problem, one could think. Why not asking someone? But asking someone? What if my question were silly? What if I brought me into ridicule by asking this question? I did not dare to ask!

Right at the end of my time in Marburg I found them, it was not such easy to find them. Well, it would have been easy to ask someone, but this wasn't my world.

\*

## **Chapter 8.2: Universität Stuttgart; 04/01/1993 until 09/30/1996 Art History; Philosophy; Anglo-American and Modern German Literature**

The university in Stuttgart, not that a university as Marburg. The human sciences amidst the city in ugly buildings, the natural sciences far away, a large new campus. As in Marburg, philosophy should become important, but also Anglo-American Literature (and movies). I would leave the university without a degree in the end, but it was nevertheless an important time.

\*

I had to visit the faculty of philosophy after I enrolled in Stuttgart to introduce myself. I'm no longer sure who sat opposite to me, the head of the faculty most likely. Whoever, he looked at my credits, then he raised his head and said: Oh, you studied by Mr. Bieri! And I thought: Well, I was one semester there, attended a few courses of him, is this not a bit too much to say, I have studied by him? And I said: Yes, I have!

Well, I had the impulse to say something else, but thought that it would be better to agree with him. I was there to introduce myself, not to start a discussion. But it's interesting, like to say that I have cooked at the Bayerischer Hof in Munich, the gourmet restaurant of course! But is this really such telling? Maybe I have been a shitty cook? The wonderful world of name-dropping.

\*

## **Chapter 9: Second Apprenticeship to a Book Seller in Weinsberg; 06/01/1996 until 06/31/1998**

What should be my first memory of that time? M.? I have still an envelope with drawings that she bestowed me, and others. Okay, maybe it's only because I'm sometimes sentimental, cannot throw such stuff simply in the bin. I have still stuffed animals, I simply cannot throw them away, for one of them my grandma crocheted something to wear. A bear, a female bear, Laura. So, perhaps it's only cloying sentimentality, potentially not.

\*

Selling books, something special? Well, this business, at least in Germany, has some specialities. Only to mention the price fixing for books, the same book costs all the same at every bookshop, large or small, in a big city or the smallest town. Yeah, in a way, selling books is something special, but isn't it also a work?

At the vocational school, they asked us why we have decided to learn this job. Well, the standard answer was: Because I like reading books. Okay, one should like books if selling them, but wasn't that not somewhat naive? Okay, I was much older than most of the other students, but what about travel guides, cookbooks, or books about economics? Nice to like novels, to like to read, but what about something like "the reality of the working environment"? As it was on me to answer the question, I said: I have to earn money. It was maybe somewhat unfair, but not untrue.

\*

The proprietress of the bookshop had a young daughter, four years old as I began my apprenticeship there, if I'm not wrong. She was in the kindergarten in the morning – later at school? – and thereafter in the shop. She had a place to play and to sleep in the office, often she wanted to play with me. One of her favorite games was "Grenze" (border).

The bookshop was a smaller one and somewhat contorted, therefore, some passages narrow. I had to block the passage, and she tried to overcome my blocking. Okay, she would have no chance, and she liked it, after I had done as wished, had blocked the passage, simply to run around my blocking, to stand behind me. Yeah, she had a lot of fun, and it was a special experience for me, not having an own child.

At one day the proprietress told me that her daughter would frequently talk about me, while

having dinner. That she would benefit much from my calm nature. Well, I was surprised and it was interesting to see how others rated you. I would not have called me a balanced person or so, but one full of self-doubts, insecure, not able to real interpersonal relations.

\*

I had some difficulties at the vocational school, especially the subject "German", or better, with the teacher. It was after my time at the university, studying among others Anglo-American and Modern German Literature. Well, he started with topics like literary genres, and discovered that I made no memos. He addressed me and asked why I would not write down what he taught us. I answered that I would have studied literature, and that this would be nothing new to me. He was upset about my answer and told me that I would have to write down what he would teach us. I would have to leave the room otherwise. I stood up and left the room! This was only my first clash with a teacher at the vocational school for booksellers in Stuttgart, others should follow.

\*

### **Chapter 10: Working as Book Seller in Karlsruhe; 07/07/1998 until 02/22/1999**

It was crazy in a way, what I did, living in Bad Friedrichshall and working in Karlsruhe – commuting every day! Very early I had to stand up, to drive to Eppingen. Over twenty miles, over forty minutes of driving, the first part! Then from Eppingen until Karlsruhe by train, over thirty miles and over an hour. Crazy! And the same way back after work, of course.

Okay, I planned to move to Karlsruhe, at a certain time, but I hesitated, and it was no stupid decision in the end – right away for two reasons. The first was short term, the second I should discover only years later. Yeah, Karlsruhe, a nice city in a way, but it became not mine.

\*

Karlsruhe offered me, among others, two shops. The second I will possibly discuss later, the other one was a music store. Not very large, but with an interesting assortment of CDs. There I discovered a CD that should change a lot, Portishead, more precisely their first album named after the band. I have no precise memory, but it had an impact, and not much later I bought their first album there, Dummy.

The discovery of slow rhythms, and very different lyrics, different from the normal lyrics you heard. As said, I have no precise memories, but I started to get interested in aspects like Trip-Hop, or whatever you wanna call it. And until today, knowing what I have written about Beth Gibbons in "My Dark Heart – Itinerary", such music moves me in an exceptional way. And it all began with Portishead, Portishead, in Karlsruhe.

Many years later, I came back to Karlsruhe, I have to talk about that "coming back" more often in this chapter. And I looked for the store, right "behind" the bookshop. I found it, better, the exceptional door. The door, the shop no longer, as many other things in Karlsruhe.

\*

Karlsruhe, it also stands for something else, not only discovering new music. At the end, details later, I was very depressed by the situation.

I had learned a new job, had tried to give my life a different direction, and now it would be over. I

had tried to get a new job at a bookshop, but the job market is very limited in this field. And, it's traditionally a woman's job, not many men work in bookshops. But if, then mostly in the better positions – as a side note. I found no alternative and was unsure about my future.

It was winter, and over two decades ago there was in fact still snow. Much snow at this time, the road covered with snow. Before Eppingen, the road leaded steeply downwards, I on the top, further down a tractor with a heavy trailer. While driving down I thought: If I accelerated now, the tractor was very slow, I could get a massive excess in speed. It would be impossible, by these road conditions, to break, or to try to evade the trailer. From a certain, effortlessly to reach point on, it would be inevitable not to have a very severe accident, car crash, most likely, with my small car, deadly. I accelerated, but not enough.

I know, at this moment, these seconds, there was a very thin line, very thin, between doing it, and not. Not that this was the only time, but I think that I was never before, and after, that near to the final decision to do it. I would say, exactly fifty-fifty. And, I do not know what decided, not to floor the gas pedal.

\*

## **Chaper 11: Working as Cook; 03/01/1999 until 06/30/2012**

Yeah, my career as bookseller had ended abruptly and not so cool. I had tried to find another job as a bookseller, somewhat, had found a new job as cook. In the kitchen again, but an interesting restaurant.

The following years, actually lasting until today, enfolded a long succession of jobs. Looking back? It seems in a way scary, but in a way relieving. I had one fear as a child, working my whole life in one factory. They would present me a clock or whatever at my fortieth jubilee, and I would know that I was a dead old man now, only with some broken dreams. And seen from this angle, I was perfect my entire life therein, to give this fear never the slightest chance.

I'm on my way of getting sixty, but my mind is still young, pretty young. I see one reason therefore that constantly there was something new in my life. A new job, a new city, new people around me, new dishes, new positions, new employers.....a constant change of everything surrounding me. And, it gave me the possibility never run into danger to have to get too closely involved in other people. A maverick (misfit) anyway, but importantly, never long at one place.

Not much has changed until today, at least so far, working since some months in Auenstein. And yet, much happened in the following years, would I have to point two one exceptional moment I would have to ask for two. September the eleventh, 2001. And this one night in February 2015, I do not know the exact day, somewhat in the middle.

### **Chapter 11.1: In Heilbronn (Cook); 03/01/1999 until 04/08/2002 Southern French Restaurant**

In the kitchen back again, a small restaurant with Southern French kitchen, an unmarried couple. She from Heilbronn, with two apprenticeships, cook and restaurateur / restaurant specialist, made the service. He, a cook from France, made the kitchen. They had just opened the restaurant as I joint them, they had met in Béziers, a partner city of Heilbronn.

It seemed a good opportunity to get into the kitchen again, as book selling offered nothing. And it was not bad at all, I stayed for a right long time, in my world, I learned a lot. It was funny, they always talked French with each other and I understood nothing.

Looking back, 1999, it appears like a different world, so much has happened since then. But also

this job found an end, and it has been a somewhat tragic situation. Had I made a mistake to leave? It became a matter like Karlsruhe, but I discovered also this only some years after I had left the job.

\*

At some point, the head chef's French mother and his sister, together with her baby, had been in Heilbronn to visit him. Two nice memories.

First, I came to work and a small casserole stood on the stove. There was something in it, not much, smooth, with a clove of garlic in the middle. I asked him, as he came, what this would be. He smiled and told me: Well, this is purée for the baby. With garlic? Of course, babies like the pleasant taste of garlic. Well, not many German mothers would get this idea.

The second. I cleaned peppers, to cut them later. His mother stood for some time beside me, watched me, and said then something like: Mr. Maurer, you are working very accurate! Well, I always try to remove really all the seeds and white parts. I took it as a deep compliment, from a French woman who was itself no bad cook.

\*

I learned cooking in a different way there. A small restaurant, thirty-five places, if I'm not wrong now, and two cooks. A sophisticated menu, mainly fish and seafood. But, of course, also lamb or poultry, everything self-made, à la minute cooking. Three or four courses as a standard, and me starting again with cooking.

One of the sentences I will never forget: "Lassen Sie das fallen, Herr Maurer." (Let this fall, Mr. Maurer.) The meaning? Well, say only two tables, four persons each, eight guests in total, seems not that much. But, say further on only three courses, means suddenly twenty-four courses. Okay, the French head chef the boss, I made starters, side dishes and dessert, and I always wanted to make everything at once. He taught me to work well-structured. That you sometimes begin with something, but then stop it, to do something else, to continue then to that what you did before. Or, that sometimes you are simply doing one thing after the other, but in a meaningful way. But, never ever try to do everything immediately and all together, this will always end messy. "Let this fall" meant that I should stop doing something, that I should concentrate on what was important for the moment. I had my problems with it at the beginning, today it's the basis of my style to work.

\*

This event belongs not to this time but is related to this French restaurant. And, because I have no real idea when it happened, I put it in this chapter.

I got a chef's jacket bestowed from the owners of the restaurant - why? I have no memory, birthday?, but it had embroidered the logo and the name of the restaurant. I kept the chef's jacket as a memory after I quit.

My mother asked me at a certain point if she should not remove the embroidery so that I could wear the chef's jacket at the current restaurant. I told her very firmly that she should never do this because this chef's jacket would be a memento for me, an essential one. But my mother was my mother!

She showed me one day the chef's jacket, proudly, she had removed the embroidery, now I could wear the chef's jacket again. I was totally upset, she had destroyed this memory, and she acted as if she had no idea why I could be upset. Didn't she make something very nice?

Yeah, it sometimes seemed that it was totally unimportant what others thought or felt, for my mother, only her opinions and ideas counted. This was one of the most chilling moments in my relationship with my mother.

\*

**Chapter 11.2:**  
**In Stuttgart (Cook); 04/15/2002 until 06/30/2003**  
**Party Caterer**

From Heilbronn to Stuttgart, but I did the same stupidity as so often. I did not move to Stuttgart, I commuted every day from Bad Friedrichshall to Stuttgart, and back. I needed normally forty-five minutes, using the freeway, one way, many miles, and gallons – hey, a bit like working in Los Angeles and living in Azusa or the Valley. But, it was not the worst time in my life, but, I had the feeling after a year that I should do something different again.

\*

I'm somewhat nit-picking what cleanness at my workplace concerns. Very much, to be honest. One illustration.

As I worked for some while in Stuttgart (Zuffenhausen where they make the nice Porsche cars) as the mother of my female employer (gosh, no feminine word for boss in English!) joined us to help. I have to say that she had, together with her husband, owned a butchery, had worked in a butchery her whole life, now retired. I worked for a while, she watched me for a while, as she said: My daughter had told me, and in fact, your workplace looks all the time as tidy as you would work nothing. Then we looked at each other, and she continued rapidly: But this not mean that you would not work a lot. You know, saying this as a Swabian woman (wow, no word for "Schwäbin" as well!) is a massive compliment! Yeah, it was funny to hear this.

\*

Chapter 11.7 - yes, I know that this is not chapter 11.7. But the end of this chapter was the foundation for chapter 11.7. I often felt a pain in my left leg with the time, when I drove to Stuttgart in the morning, a kind of dragging pain. It was not very painful, and I neglected it - a big mistake. I normally cooked, but I also delivered catering, typically in heavy heat-containers, carried out festivities. Well, I was younger and I could carry them alone - so far, so good. Coming back late at night, all the clean-up, I had not only once backache. Backache after work, some pain in the leg in the morning, I did not ponder on it.

I sometimes had some problems over the next two years, but always not severe. I worked hard, some pain something normal, I simply ignored it. Until chapter 11.7. Then I had suddenly to pay the price for my ignorance. But later it became obvious, it all had begun during this time in Stuttgart.

\*

**Chapter 11.3:**  
**In Wertheim (Sous-chef); 07/01/2003 until 05/16/2004**  
**Hotel**

Wertheim, my first job in a well-known hotel – well, not really. It was one of the most sophisticated hotels in Germany, in former time, but this time ended at this time. Details later. The funny point, I was not aware of that. As normally at this time, I had simply looked at "HotelCareer", had written several job applications, all around Germany, simply to see who would answer. Wertheim reacted, among other hotels, a job interview, and I became aware that this was this special hotel. But, nicely, not before I drove to Wertheim, so I had to do it, and had to realize that the good days were past. I got a job offered, and I thought: Why not! And, because it was not possible to commute to Wertheim, I searched for a place to live, and I found one. A nice one, in a nice landscape, nice

memories, even if the hotel decayed more and more. The last head chef who cooked as a Michelin-starred head chef at this hotel? Well, I would meet him at my next workplace. But for now I was in Wertheim.

\*

This hotel was, for a time, one of the most famous hotels in Germany, with high decorated kitchens, rightly or wrongly. Whatever, it was a hotel with various tennis courts, and at this time, one could have the fun of playing with Boris Becker over the weekend. The owner simply engaged him occasionally for a weekend. The hotel was the "hobby" of the owner, not therefore to make money. Well, as a successful entrepreneur, it was possible for him. But times changed, and suddenly, there was no longer the money needed for that "hobby". The hotel, a park with several buildings, decayed from now on more and more, until the owner had to declare bankruptcy. They searched for a new owner, but nobody was interested in, too much it would have cost to modernize everything. Nobody, except for two restaurant proprietors from the "new eastern states of Germany" – we have to talk about them later. Nevertheless, this was the moment when I started to work there.

\*

#### **Chapter 11.4: In Heiligendamm (Chef de Partie Saucier); 05/17/2004 until 10/31/2004 Hotel**

I did it, at the end of Wertheim, as always at this time - HotelCareer, job applications everywhere in Germany, let's see what will happen. I know that I had a job interview near Rüdeshiem, and then also Heiligendamm reacted. And, I realized, that the last Michelin-starred head chef from Wertheim was now the executive chef in Heiligendamm, he would do the job interview with me. Well, at this time it was not relevant for me where I would work next, I simply applied for jobs I found interesting, one I would get. The Baltic Sea, the former GDR, The East, the communist part, why not! And it would not become my worst time in life, in many regards, quite on the contrary.

\*

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, it wasn't bad at all to live there for a time. Right on the job interview, the executive chef, the last Michelin-starred head chef from Wertheim, told me that I should never ever call someone here an "Ossi" (Easterner). They would be very proud here to be "Hanseaten" (citizens of a Hanseatic town, member of the Hanseatic League). Not far away from Heiligendamm is Rostock – sorry, the "Hansestadt Rostock" (Hanseatic City of Rostock). And, that even in the time of the GDR, they never liked the Saxons and their dialect. And I thought: Hey, it seems like one from the south, a Southerner like I, could find a good place here, at the coast, in the north, in the north-east. And in fact, I liked it to be there.

\*

I liked the landscape, the Baltic Sea, even if always cold. Even in summer, the Baltic Sea is relatively cold. I once swam for a longer time, but I had to stop because I started to freeze – in summer, it was a very sunny day! The next day I had a cold – but apart from that.....

I had my bike with me, I liked it riding along the sea, often through woods. In the direction of Warnemünde or Kühlungsborn. I have to say, that in a way, it was a quite time, with at least some moments of calm, my days off, being on the way.

\*

**Chapter 11.5:  
In Kühlungsborn (Sous Chef); 11/01/2004 until 12/15/2004  
Hotel**

A short interlude in Kühlungsborn, still at the Baltic Sea. Short, but absolutely weird, from the first until the last day. Maybe the most crazy time in a job I ever had.

\*

My first workday, I entered the hotel to say that I would be in, and got "welcomed" by the director of the hotel, with the interesting words: Oh, you're here? We doubted that you would come! Well,.....was this a joke?

Then I got informed that the head chef, whom I had my job interview with, was no longer employed at the hotel. But, just today, right now, the new head chef would have his first day. And it would be fine that I would be also here, then he could introduce us both to the other staffers at once. The next was, that I got introduced to the new head chef, who had arrived shortly ahead of me, and who was also surprised that I was here, because they had told him that he would have no sous chef at the beginning.

Okay, it was strange for the head chef as well as for me, and we both had the feeling that this all seemed somewhat crazy. It should become even more crazy in the following, but we introduced ourselves at first to the other workers, especially the kitchen, and started then our first weird workday together.

\*

One of the most weird situations? Well, I had my day off, but after it the head chef told me that he would have had an unbelievable experience last evening. Controlling the dishes before the service brought them to the guests, he suddenly was taken aback. He addressed the saucier: Hey, problems with counting? There are only two scallops on the plate, where's the third? The saucier replied: Our hotel director walked by, right? Yes,.....? Well,.....? And in fact, for a moment, as the hotel director walked by, he had not looked at that plate! Use your imagination, but there are moments when you think: This can only happen in this business, it's just a crazy business!

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**Chapter 11.6:  
In Munich (Chef de Partie Entremetier and Gardemanger);  
12/29/2004 until 06/30/2005  
Hotel**

Yeah, had worked as (Chef de partie) Saucier in Heiligendamm, in a hotel kitchen, now I would begin as Saucier in Munich, again a large hotel, gourmet restaurant. Well, sounded not that bad, but as always, matters developed a bit differently. And Munich?

In a way, a very nice city, but also a very petty minded city. A city where only money counts. A city of sham and phoniness. It could be nearly an American city seen that way. No, some moments have been very nice, living in Munich.

\*

Munich, in a way, a very American city, money is all what counts. In way snobbish like London, but it can also be a very nice city. Walking along the Isar, partially renaturated, for instance, can be very pleasant. The "English Garden" is very charming, especially also in winter. But, all in all, I would say, I liked Friedberg near Augsburg (and Augsburg) more, to stay in Bavaria. Restless I was in both cities, but in both cities I also had moments of calm. But not many in Munich, and in the end I was not unhappy to leave the city again. Living in the midst of the city, very near to the area where the "Oktoberfest" gets celebrated, it was not that much mine.

And yet, wouldn't there had been opportunities? The observatory, for instance? However, it did not function. But every time when I'm in the city again, for a concert, Tori Amos or Agnes Obel, I like it in a way to be there, for a day.

\*

Working in the top catering business? Well, firstly, you have to work many hours, and your private life will become very limited. Okay, this was also the case in Heiligendamm – I will talk about it – but much more in Munich.

The head chef stood, on day, in the kitchen, outraged, after a meeting. It was about the waitstaff, he had noticed that they noted their overtime, to the quarter of hour exact. I will not quote him exactly, but it ended in the sentence: Do they wanna fool me? In the top catering business no overtime exists! – Well, in fact, they exist, extra hours, a lot of, but you have to accept them. You're otherwise wrong in this business, this was his message. In the kitchen, no one talked about extra hours.

\*

### **Chapter 11.7: The Worst Two Months In My Whole Life; June and July 2005 Screaming Of Pain**

Munich was history, I had found a new job in Stuttgart. And it should become a very relaxing time, in theory, I thought, two months without working, two months vacation. Not only that between the two jobs was a whole month, I had still all my vacation days plus many overtime, additional four weeks! Two months when I could do whatever I wanted to do, I thought. Two months fighting the worst pain I ever had in my life it should become. The beginning of a chaotic time.

\*

It happened suddenly, without a warning, that evening. Sure, I had ignored all the warnings of the last two years, I had not taken them seriously. Or, better, I had no idea that they were the warning for the now coming.

Lumbago, lower back pain, but in a very harsh way. I never had such a pain before, I lay on the ground, every little movement caused pain. I'm not sure who, but somebody called the doctor on call, and my sister was there. He asked if I could come to his doctor's office, he could not come now, but it was in no way possible for me. He came later and saw that it was earnest, that I had an earnest problem. And now a very strange story began.

He was a special doctor in many ways, and he decided to treat me, not only for emergency now, but also thereafter. Why was this important? Well, his way of treatment was not the normal way. His first step was to give and to prescribe me forceful and expensive painkillers. His approach was, that I had to be pain-free, then he would and could start with the treatment. The effect? Well, severe spasms always accompanied the lumbago. Did I move now, I had still spasms, but I did not feel the pain anymore! This made it possible that I could find at least some rest, even sleep, could, even if

not easy, come to his doctor's office where he started a long treatment. At the beginning I did not understand really, I did not see it. But then I understood that he used syringes with very long needles to inject the remedy directly to the spinal cord. Well, I felt not much, intoxicated by the strong painkiller, but it was always a wonderful relief when he did it. But even then, it took weeks to be able to walk again, not only from the bed to the doctor's office, and even after two months I had bad problems.

I had recurring moments with problems over the following years, more or less severe, it took years, until I got on top of my problems with the back. Today? I had no real issues anymore, for some years now, it got better and better with the years. One episode, chapter 14.1, but it was my mistake. I feel that I should be careful from timer to time, sometimes I use athletic tape, or I sleep for two to three days on the ground. The hard ground is good for the back, but the last time was some years ago. I have bought me angora kidney warmers which I use especially over fall, wet and cold. All in all, for some years I hadn't any bigger difficulty anymore, and it began with a special doctor.

\*

**Chapter 11.8:  
In Stuttgart (Chef de Partie Tournant); 08/01/2005 until 10/15/2005  
Restaurant**

Sometimes it rains, sometimes it pours, sometimes it's a real thunderstorm.

The top three of my most fucking jobs is set, I'm only not sure about the runner-up and the third-placed. But I have not to ponder a second to know what job the unthreatened number one is: Voilà, this job, this job in the heart of Stuttgart! Was all bad? No, I lived in Bad Cannstatt, and Bad Cannstatt is a gorgeous place. Is Bad Cannstatt the most beautiful part of Stuttgart? Well, at least the quarter with all this famous (open-air) baths. Especially "the famous three", the "LEUTZE", the "Mineralbad Berg", and the "SoleBad Cannstatt". And of course, there's the Neckar river, a beautiful historic downtown and much more. So living was nice, working was shit. In this job interview, I got the most shit told of all time. I would have gone within days or weeks, but the head chef there asked me if I could stay for some weeks longer. Well, as a pleasant guy, I did him the favor.

\*

**Chapter 11.9:  
In Stuttgart (Head Chief); 10/16/2005 until 11/15/2005  
Restaurant**

One of my very short detours, very short. And not much I remember, but it was the end, living in Bad Cannstatt. Back home, a job in Heilbronn would be the next. Will become a very short chapter, I would say.

\*

**Chapter 11.10:  
In Heilbronn (Head Chief); 12/05/2005 until 01/15/2006  
Restaurant**

The fun fact first, about this even for me very short job. The first day, as I came to start with working, my employer asked if I really want to start with working. He was tenant of the "place", with a still longer contract. But the owner had told him that there would be other interested party to lease the "place". Nothing would be decided yet, but most likely he would rescind from his contract. And, the new owners would not be interested in the current staff. I said: Nice to tell me this at my first day when I'm here. What shall I do now? I started with working.

Well, it did not last long, and he had negotiated his compensation, and I had no longer a job. The "place"? Well, tomorrow will be Thursday, jazz club day, and I look from time to time into the kitchen. The new tenants? Well, I see them every Thursday when I'm listening to jazz. We have sometimes a little conversation. I will tell them this story one day, when I lost my job at the Altes Theater in Sontheim because of new tenants. Greetings to Katharina and Oli, see you tomorrow, at my old workplace, to greet the new tenants.

\*

**Chapter 11.11:  
In Leingarten (Sous-chef); 02/01/2006 until 04/15/2006  
Restaurant**

When it rains, it pours.

Yeah, that's sometimes bloody true! After the very short interlude in Sontheim, the next job, Leingarten, was really a shit job, definitely among the top three. Let's name my employer there, Joe. Later, during a job interview, the potential employer asked me: How was it, working with "Psycho Joe"? And yeah, he was fucking right, Joe was a fucking psycho. But hey, I endured it almost three months to work for and with this psycho. Not that bad for a guy like me!

\*

**Chapter 11.12:  
In Lauffen (Cook); 04/18/2006 until 10/31/2008  
Restaurant Café**

Two and a half years, not that often one can find such a long timespan of employment at one workplace in my résumé. And it could have lasted even longer, if.....well, if there wouldn't have been one of this stupid developments, one can find very frequently in my résumé. And, it has been the time when I have weighted the most, at the end over three hundred pounds!

But this time seems, in a total, to have been an unburdened time, at least it seems so to me writing these words. I had still severe problems with my back at the beginning, but compared to the chaotic time before? And yet, a long timespan, but not much about that time comes me to mind.....

\*

**Chapter 11.13:  
In Friedberg and Heilbronn (Executive Chief); 11/01/2008 until 04/30/2010  
Retirement Home**

After my time in Lauffen, this relative stable time, I also applied for a job as deputy executive chef in a retirement home. It was in a town far from Bad Friedrichshall, but I cannot remember which

city it was. I can remember the parking lot very precisely, where I parked my car, and a crossing, and a street, but not the name of the city. This is what puzzles me often, regarding my memory. I can remember very precisely nullities, but cannot remember major facts. Whatever, as I was there, I got another job offer.

My opposite during the job interview was a "superior executive chef". A person, liable for all the retirement homes of the company in a certain region. We visited the local retirement home, as far as I can remember. But then she asked me, because of my skills and knowledge, if it wouldn't be more interesting for me to get a job as executive chef, not deputy executive chef. Well, I agreed, and got a job in Friedberg near Augsburg offered, in Bavaria.

**Chapter 11.13.1:  
In Friedberg; 11/01/2008 until 30/11/2009**

Friedberg, near Augsburg, in Bavaria, was one of the nicest places I ever lived, and also Augsburg is a very nice city. Interesting, I have many memories regarding both cities, without long pondering about it. It was an unburdened time on one side – well, the job was a disaster. But I can write about many pleasant memories in this chapter.

\*

**Chapter 11.13.2:  
In Heilbronn; 12/01/2009 until 04/30/2010**

Back in Heilbronn, well, Heilbronn not really a beauty. The job not much better, still the same company, only another retirement home in another city. Interesting, I have only a few memories, not so nice ones, about the job – seems to become a not so nice chapter.

\*

**Chapter 11.14:  
In Haßmersheim (Sous-chef); 05/01/2010 until 07/15/2010  
Restaurant**

After the longer time in Lauffen, and my first time in retirement homes, a chaotic time began. And it began with a very short detour to Haßmersheim. The most prominent memory of that time? Joanna Newsom and her album "Have One On Me", especially "Kingfisher". A song that should become significant for me, several years later. Apart from that, it was a disaster.

\*

I had spent my apprenticeship in a medieval castle, above the river "Neckar", now I worked on the other side of the river, in the next, up the river, medieval castle. There had always been connections between these two medieval castles, at least at the time of my apprenticeship, thirty years ago. My sous-chef during the apprentice, for instance, had done his apprentice in the kitchen, where I began to work now. Well, not in fact.

Much had changed over those thirty years, a new kitchen, as well as new tenants. And, less fun. The only interesting? A part of this medieval castle is a raptor center with impressing birds. Eagles, of course, but also large owls, and many more. I liked it much to visit them from time to time.

\*

**Chapter 11.15:  
In Heilbronn (Cook); 04/01/2010 until 02/28/2011  
Restaurant**

The next job, after Haßmersheim, in Heilbronn again, somewhat longer, not very satisfying. My first, and in this way last, contact with today's so trendy system catering. All standardized, sauces pre-packed.....quantity rather than quality. Mostly young customers, often enough assholes, a lot of boozing and eating, if hungry because of boozing. That's the way one can make a good deal of money!

\*

Why do I like it more to be in Matosinhos than in Heilbronn? Well, apart from the obvious, the ocean, it's food. Better, going out for a meal. Heilbronn? Especially downtown, the pedestrian area, along the river, the Neckar, nearly all restaurants belong to system catering. The stuff comes out of the cold storage, convenience food, or from a centralized production, ready to use. There's no longer any idea of creativity. And in Matosinhos?

Well, I know one MacDonald's and one Burger King in Matosinhos, but several of them in Heilbronn. Matosinhos is somewhat larger than Heilbronn. Sure, different restaurants have different standards, but apart from that, that they are always surprisingly high, they are normally family run. In any case, finding something one can call system catering, will be very difficult in Matosinhos, but it's the standard in Heilbronn. Why do I write this? Well, as said, I worked now in such a place.

\*

**Chapter 11.16:  
In Neckarwestheim (Chef de Partie Saucier); 04/01/2011 until 10/15/2011  
Restaurant**

There are moments in life.....some are weird. This job interview had been something special, together with the tenant and his head chef. Right from the beginning, it was obvious that the head chef and I were something like soulmates. It became strange with the time, not only regarding cooking, but also regarding many other matters. It seemed that we could become a perfect team, well, as long as there was an employee meeting.

The topic of my life. It could have become something good, special, but then it developed in a very different way. And in this case, a massive disappointment waited. But it was a perfect time at the beginning.

\*

**Chapter 11.17:  
In Pfedelbach (Cook); 11/01/2011 until 04/14/2012  
Restaurant**

Yeah, after the big disappointment in Neckarwestheim, the next disappointment. And yet again, for a moment, it looked like that I could have found my place. We made plans, I wrote menus, we even

bought new plates. But then daddy came with sudden new ideas, and everything made so far turned into a farce. It hurt me.

\*

**Chapter 11.18:  
In Obereisesheim (Sous-chef); 04/15/2012 until 06/30/2012  
Restaurant**

When it rains, it pours.

Yeah, sometimes that's bloody true! After the guy from Leingarten, the guy from Obereisesheim was the second kitchen psycho I worked for. "Kitchen Psychos", guys like Gordon Ramsay – do something funny. Google "kitchen psycho UK" and chose pictures. My fourth picture was Gordon Ramsay, the sixth was Patrick Bateman (Christian Bale) from the movie American Psycho! But.....

.....who had been the bigger psycho, the one from Leingarten or the one from Obereisesheim? Later, during a job interview, the potential employer said to me: Oh, you also worked for Mr. XXX, I also. Unbelievable how many cooks this man burns. Definitely one of the top three of my shit jobs!

\*

**Chapter 12:  
No longer Cook, in Ilsfeld; 08/01/2012 until 06/30/2014**

The end of a long succession, working as a cook – I decided that I should end with cooking. Especially the last three jobs had been that frustrating, I was sick of cooking. Other working times, more in the field of sale, also being a salesman, it seemed a good job opportunity. And yet, it should not function, promises during the job interview, but with no real substance in the end. Well, a try, but with no real outcome at the end.

**Chapter 12.1:  
Order Picker; 08/01/2012 until 07/31/2013**

I started my "career" as order picker, no longer the cook who placed the orders, now the guy who picked the ordered item for the cook. Well, during the job interview, we had talked about to start as order picker, to get later the opportunity to work in the ordering acceptance. This would have a good combination of being a cook and a salesperson. But, of course, it doesn't happen, as so often, I would not get the opportunity, about that we had talked during the job interview.

\*

**Chapter 12.2:  
Machine Operator; 08/01/2013 until 06/30/2014**

Okay, as it longer and longer not functioned to switch to the ordering acceptance, and I was obviously more and more unhappy to be a picker, they asked me if production could be a staging

post for me, until the situation at the ordering acceptance would be clarified. I said "yes", and was sorry about this decision at the end. I should never get a chance to work at the ordering acceptance.

\*

### **Chapter 13: Working as Cook again; 07/01/2014 until 01/14/2022**

Yeah, it had not functioned in Ilsfeld, neither to find another job in this working field. Back to cooking? Well, I got a job in a retirement home offered, again a retirement home after my so far not so good experiences in retirement homes, but it seemed interesting. Only the assistant chef, with a very congenial appearing executive chef, and in fact! I had the feeling, for a longer time, that this could be the last working place in my life! My life, obviously, unfolded differently, but this will be one of the most tragic experiences in my life.

And then, of course, "The Night"! In Lauffen, the next workplace after Ilsfeld, writing started until right now. A chapter with many ups and downs.

#### **Chapter 13.1: In Lauffen (Assistant Executive Chef); 07/01/2014 until 06/30/2016 Retirement Home**

The executive chef told me, at my first workday, that there had been some changes. The retirement home in Lauffen was one of around fifteen, that formed a small group. But no longer, an acquisition, then one more, and suddenly the small group was part of a French company that ran retirement homes in several European nations like the UK and Switzerland – France, of course. But, they had said that nothing would change. Of course, he said, I do not believe in this.

Everything seemed to develop good for some time, of course, changes came. Nonetheless, it seemed stable, and in fact, the executive chef was a very pleasant person. However, it became more and more uncomfortable over time, especially for him, with catastrophic consequences.

\*

There is this "romantic" idea, there's a retirement home, and they have a kitchen, and this kitchen cooks the meals for the residents. Well, in the older times, yes, but these times are over forever. Whereby, in Lauffen it just developed, most extreme it was later in Oedheim, ch. 13.5. And in fact, we still cooked only for the residents in Lauffen, say for around the first year, but also in fact, the executive chef sometimes talked about the "old days". He liked baking, and he was the executive chef in Lauffen since the opening, over twenty years ago. At the beginning, he said, he had time to bake most of the cakes himself, especially for special events like onion cakes. Enough staff, not like today, but we still baked the sweet yeast bread, at least that.

But with the new owners, more and more "improvement", until the day we had to start with cooking for Meals on Wheels as well. The cooking as such is not the problem, some meals more. But they have to be ready early, and therewith also the rest of the meals for the residents, to dress the meals for each person separately, to pack everything. And this needs a lot of time, time you have no longer for cooking for the residents.

Well, one could now say, but you get more staff then! Funny, that's the trick! Meals on Wheels has to pay the company for this service, but you get not more staff, that's a fine way to expand the profit of the company, to satisfy your owners or shareholders! The next bonuses for the management are cut and dried, and you at "the base" have to see how to get things done! Yeah, that's how it functions, not at all retirement homes, but at many.

\*

The executive chef had a nervous breakdown, a real one! Clinic, rehab, and much more, he would never cook again. For a shorter time in a kitchen again, not full time, but it did not function.

He tried to be Mr. Perfect, for the company we worked, the retirement home, for everybody, and everything. A meeting, all the executive chefs, a young woman, fresh from school and maternity leave, announced new rules and guidelines. He disagreed with her, argued that they would not fit to the reality of the kitchens, that he has done the job for several decades now. He was disappointed that the others stayed silent, knowing that they would not implement the new rules. She said to him at a certain point that he would be nothing more than a "Motzki" (a grouchy person).

Later, back in Lauffen, he tried to implement all the new rules and regulations, knowing that it would not function. If I asked him something, he only said: Why you're asking me, I'm only a Motzki. He felt severely offended by her statement.

This was the beginning of the end, I was not there the day it happened. I got a phone call at home, that he would not be working tomorrow, that he had a nervous breakdown, that he would not be back fast. I had some phone calls with him later. He told me on one of these phone calls that it would have been better working like I would do it - not saying always and to everything "yes". It should be a long time before I saw him again, until this year, at the Heuchelberg, he is a part-time gardener there.

\*

**Chapter 13.2:  
In Neuenstadt (Cook); 07/01/2016 until 08/15/2016  
Restaurant**

After the years in Lauffen, again a short detour. It was one of those useless jobs, not many memories, not much to say about. A very short chapter, most likely.

\*

**Chapter 13.3:  
In Obereisesheim (Cook); 08/18/2016 until 02/28/2018  
Restaurant**

Not all stupid jobs lasted for a short period, sometimes they lasted longer, like this one. Okay, there was a time it was not that bad, but it became worse with the time. And to offer around hundred dishes was always nonsensical. But I signed a contract, and in the end I stayed relatively long.

\*

**Chapter 13.4:  
In Bad Friedrichshall (Head Chief); 03/01/2018 until 05/31/2018  
Hotel**

Some jobs would have had a big potential, but it did not function finally. It was sad, I was disappointed at the end, so much more could have been. I could cook my kitchen, for a short while, and the guests liked it very much. A short timespan, but much to say about. And it started very

nicely, in San Francisco.

\*

**Chapter 13.5:  
In Oedheim (Cook); 06/27/2018 until 08/31/2019  
Retirement Home**

Back in retirement homes, the job in Oedheim seemed to be okay. Less money, but easier working. Not that we had not much to do, but no longer á la carte, no longer executive chef, only a cook. Good workmates, it functioned no that bad for a longer time, but then.....always these dumb developments. I had to leave at the end, and it was a good decision after all. It would have made no sense to stay for longer. A chapter with a fucking ending.

\*

**Chapter 13.6:  
In Heilbronn (Executive Chef); 01/09/2019 until 02/09/2020  
Retirement Home**

The next retirement home, this time as executive chef again. A good income, and some aspects developed good. But it all ended stupidly, especially when realizing how the management of the home had acted all the time, behind my back. A good lesson about dishonesty, and the point to say, never working in a retirement home again. I was pissed off when leaving this job.

\*

**Chapter 13.7:  
In Heilbronn (Gardemanger and Patisserie); 03/09/2020 until 08/15/2021  
Restaurant**

There were at least three moments during the job interview where I thought, do not do it. But, on the other hand, it seemed to be a possibility to become a Patisserie, I had already a job offer as head chef. Well, no full-time Patisserie, but to fifty percent at least, maybe even more – and the rest, especially in the area of hors d'oeuvre. An offer, so hauntingly beautiful, and I only a weak male, I had to surrender, I said yes.

Of course, it should not function, but the first downer was, yes, COVID-19. Just started with working it became obvious, there was a pandemic, and this pandemic would have consequences. A short time after my first workday, the first lockdown got implemented. I lost my job again, but with a reinstatement guaranty.

Fun fact, not very funny! I had tickets for two concerts in March 2020. At the beginning of the month, Elizabeth Grant in Cologne, at the end of the month, Agnes Obel in Munich. The Elizabeth Grant concert – Norman Fucking Rockwell! - got canceled because the songstress got ill, the Agnes Obel concert was one of the first concerts that got canceled because of the virus – what a fucking disappointing month that had been! Well, no Elizabeth Grant concert since then, the Agnes Obel concert took place over two years later, and was fascinating.

\*

Why did it not function? Well, what functioned was, that I could show that I was a good and creative cook, especially in the field of desserts and hors d'oeuvre. But of course, I also had no problem therewith to cook the other parties. The guests liked my creations, insofar, everything was okay. Well, this mix of working and lockdowns was frustrating, not knowing what would happen next. But all this wouldn't have been so devastating, if.....

The worst evening to clarify it. The head chef, I, and a junior chef for the evening. The head chef in the office during the afternoon, I made, together with the junior chef, the preparations for the evening service. We had over sixty reservations.

Well, it got six o'clock, the first guests, the head chef was still not in the kitchen. I looked in the office – no. Well, this was not my first day, so I looked at the parking – no, not his car anymore! Well, he had one of these moments where he had no "interest" in cooking, so he drove home, without saying something. I should say that he was co-owner of the restaurant.

A cook and a junior chef in a larger kitchen and many reservations. I have to say that we handled the situation quite well, but had also a good deal of luck that the guests did not come all at once. I had a harsh discussion with the other co-owner the next day, called my head chef a "Kameradenschwein", that I would search for a new job. Well, that's cooking, a fucking insane business. Is this this crazy love, Mr. Grant?

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### **Chapter 13.8: In Bad Friedrichshall (Head Chief); 08/17/2021 until 01/14/2022 Beer Garden**

After the disappointing time in Heilbronn, I thought, let's do something different. Of course, still cooking, but why not applying at workplaces you would normally never be interested in? I applied at three workplaces which I would normally not consider as interesting, and decided on the beer garden. Not a that bad idea, primarily, but one development killed it all. Bad luck!

\*

### **Chapter 14: Working in a Butchery; 03/14/2022 until 03/10/2023**

After the failure in Bad Friedrichshall I thought, let's do something different. Especially, why cooking, why not working as a salesman again, as a bookseller or whatever? I searched, and ended up in a butchery, as a salesman. Why not, meat and sausages not unfamiliar to me, and I'm an apprenticed salesperson? Let's do it!

\*

### **Chapter 14.1: In Obereisesheim (Salesperson); 03/14/2022 until 08/24/2022**

Obereisesheim, it functioned, more or less, but was okay so far, until, yes until. Yeah, Ms. Grant, sometimes I have the feeling that – but I do not believe in God. I was willing to give it a chance, to try it seriously, but I did not figure on such a development.

\*

Yeah, it was not perfect, but okay, and it would have been interesting to see how all would have developed. Then we all got an invitation to a meeting of the staff. The topic? They would sell their company to another butchery – a disaster? Well, if it had not been this particular butchery – there was a kind of story.

In my youth, this butchery had its slaughterhouse and shop only a short distant from my home in Kochendorf. One of my schoolmates was their daughter. But they decided with the time to become bigger, no longer running such a shop, slaughter on their own, all had to be bigger. And with the time, they developed a "company philosophy" that includes suing each other, to get rid of each other. And they should become my new employers? I decided: In no way, this can only end in a disaster.

And now, exactly a year later? Well, all, also mine, branches are closed. The former owners accusing the new owner now, that they have gotten betrayed by him – what a farce. Two large articles in the Heilbronner Stimme, the newspaper.

At the staff meeting, they had been so proud. The senior bosses had got consulting contracts, junior a membership. They all had been so proud at the staff meeting! Nothing will change, all will become better. This has been the motto of the evening.

Was it good to leave? It was one of my best decisions, even if the time since then has been somewhat chaotic. It would have been a very disaster to stay.

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## **Chapter 14.2: In Auenstein (Cook); 09/01/2022 until 03/10/2023**

It was difficult to decide, after the "unintentional "ending of the last job in Obereisesheim, what to do now. After three job applications in a week, two offers in restaurants, and a job interview at a larger butchery with several branches. Two job applications in one, to be exact, one as a salesperson very near in Offenau, the other as cook in a larger distance in Auenstein. A salesperson wouldn't be the big problem, but to find a cook, that's what I got told. I took the job as cook in Auenstein.

Today is March the tenth, my last workday in this job is over. I had various reasons to quit a job so far, but not a suchlike reason. I gave it a real chance, but you have to draw red lines, and you have to be consistent then. I was consistent, today was my last workday in this job.

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## **Chapter 15: In Leingarten (Cook); 04/01/2023 until 07/18/2023 Restaurant**

Yeah, after the butcheries back in the catering business. But what a change, had my first workday on April the sixth, not long after returning from Matosinhos, Portugal? Simply a cook, part-time, production kitchen, buffets, no longer an executive position, no longer à la carte. But, it was about seven years and earning money, not more. Not more.

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In fact, not more? I had a new contract, after two months, forty hours, five days. Okay, maybe only during the summer, and therefore, to make not too much overtime. But still no à la carte, buffets, in this case it was okay. And it started to become a time of change. I started to lose weight very fast, no

two months and I had lost all the weight that I had gained over the last three years, the years of the pandemic and short-time work. But there was something, a dark cloud on the horizon, that it would become, in fact, a time of change. A time of unwanted change, but change that would be inevitable. So much better I felt now, compared to the bygone time of the last years. Not perfect, but so much better, but prepared for.....a fear crept in: Would I be capable of withstanding those changes? I found no answer.

\*

Yeah, the dark clouds on the horizon, they are never a good sign. Not, that they have to become a storm, but they are always burdensome and threatening. And, often enough, they develop into a thunderstorm, a sever thunderstorm.

What was to say? Maybe, as a beginning, that it was the first time that I should work together with a drunken person? The head chef sent him home, but the owner decided that he should stay and work. A drunken person at a dangerous workplace like a kitchen - was there something with topics like workplace safety?

And sentences like: Where's the problem? It was nothing abnormal, not that long ago, that a drunken cook stood at the oven. This did not really calm me down. I was upset and emphasized that I would drive home if this was meant seriously! Well, this and other matters have not exactly made me the favorite of the owners. But, I have my attitudes, and I define the red lines.

\*

No details, but I have to talk about it. The place grew with the decades, with more and more capacities indoor, but especially outdoor, but not the kitchen, and especially not the storage facilities, in the same way. And again, especially the walk-in freezer.

Sure, one can say that it has to impress you, what has happened there over the many years, how dramatically this place has changed. But for the kitchen, and the service, it is very difficult to handle. And if you have very severe problems like storage on top, especially for frozen food, then I would say everything tends to collapse at a certain moment.

One can disagree with me, no details, but for me, it was not acceptable as a workplace for a longer time, not to mention until retirement.

\*

The last Sunday that I worked there, the last day that I worked there. I made a pause, drank a coffee, as a colleague passed and decided to have a coffee as well. He came back with an espresso. As soon as we had finished our coffees, we went back to work. I just arrived in the kitchen and saw that there was a quarrel. The female part of the owner's couple made a lot of fuss because two cooks would make a pause together during the à la carte hours. The sous chef argued that this wouldn't be bad, after he knew who the two cooks were, because neither of them would cook à la carte! It would be good if those not cooking à la carte currently made a pause now. The à la carte cooks could then make a pause later, and we could cook for them then. But it did not help, she was totally upset!

Fun fact? The other cook clocked in before me, and I noticed that he had made a pause of four minutes and I had made a pause of seven minutes. So, it was a disaster for her that two cooks, not cooking à la carte, made for four minutes of pause together - what a shit is this!

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## **Chapter 16: In Schwabbach (Executive Chef); 24/07/2023 until today**

## Retirement Home

A beginning is always connected to the hope that it will become better, more stable, easier, and so on. And beginning something with the purpose that it simply should be a bridging period, the bridge that would bring you to your final destiny? Wow, that sounds so pathetic that it could be nearly high literature at its finest.

Chapter 16. I connect with this chapter the hope that it will be the last chapter, the last one before the final chapter: Matosinhos, Pensioner

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And if, if there were a Chapter 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.....? Who cares, if this writing will end with Chapter X, Matosinhos?

\*

A life characterized by one word: Lack of stability (three words!). But what would stability have meant? Working in a factory, married with children, a suburban home, and an Audi in the garage? Just thinking about that image frightens me! No, this wouldn't have been possible for me. I always saw too many ways in front of me, too many turn-offs. And today? Well, today, I would prefer the direct way, straight to the target. But this would possibly not fit with the other fifteen chapters, even if I liked it.

And yet, today, the last day of July, I would dare to say that this could be the second last chapter of this writing. Yeah, let's see what happens!

\*

What, if it seems to develop positively, you might find a stable basis, a stable job, and you cannot imagine that you would have for the next six or seven years the same rhythm? I never had this in my whole life, only if elementary school and main school are counted as one, but that would not be correct. Okay, not everything is perfect. But, no killer argument is within sight, and every day it seems more and more fitting. A very strange moment in my life.

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If this job were my last job, until retirement, then it would be: After a very, very difficult start it all turned into pink. Wow, I would have to worship the Hollywood sign and would have to apologize (Abbitte leisten).

\*

Yeah, it seems so, as expected, that these Hollywood fairy tales are nothing than stupid fairy tales. Welcome to chapter 17, I would say. And even if the final word not spoken, but hey, who would be dumb enough to belief in these shitty Hollywood fairy tales?

\*

If it functions, you have done the right thing. If not, was it wrong you did? Running after a dream, a hope, a desire, is it ridiculous or brave? Does the answer depend on the outcome or that you not give up? Do you say this is easy to answer? I do not think so.

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