

Bad Friedrichshall, L.A.

The Good Old Days

"Tell me something about you, Mr. Maurer. I assume that it's okay that I ask you questions?"

"Sure, but I fear that there's not so much to tell. I'm thirty-three and attended college. I can still speak English if needed, but in my business, one does not need it often. I have worked for the DA, and done some investigations for him. Somebody from his office told me that you wished to see me. I'm not married. I do not go for wives of police officers."

"And you're also a little cynic", the old man smiled.

"Well, it seems to me that this is not a bad strategy to survive in this world."

He smiled again. The bitter-sweet smile of an old man, knowing that his days were numbered. An old man who knew, that so much had changed during his lifetime, apart from the very essential matters. An old man waiting to start his big sleep.

Living In A Box

I never felt attracted by this synth-pop stuff, I thought, well, except New Order maybe - but True Faith, not Blue Monday. Talk Talk, synth-pop? Or wasn't it not more what was called New Wave? New Wave, I listened The Stranglers, until they turned to New Wave - Golden Brown, a nice song anyway. But I was most captured by Pink Floyd or Deep Purple, Cream.....and all related. A short step to blues and jazz, classical music as well. This was my sphere of music. Not the shitty stuff, always played by the radio.

"You have a new job?", he asked me.

"Yeah....."

I was not so interested in a conversation. But he seemed not to realize it.

"Cooking in a retirement home, okay for you?"

"Yeah, why not? Payment is okay, and they even cook fresh, not out of the cool storage. More than many restaurants can say nowadays."

"Yeah, a little secure life, sounds not that thrilling to me."

Now he started to suck. Yeah, sure, the thrilling life in the big city down at the West Coast. Good for fucking good songs, but the reality, at least the reality for the most of those living there?

"Yeah," I answered, "maybe I'm too weak for that? I might be simply too clever to fall too much for those false legends and blunt lies? It's a fucking nice place for dreams, but if you're not living at the beach, up the hills, or in one of this nice canyons, then it's nothing more than harsh reality. "

Let's Kill DeSantis

A talk show in Germany, not such a shallow matter like in the US, but with the known faces. One from the FDP, or maybe from the SPD or the Green Party, why not the CDU or CSU, one from the right, the AfD? A journalist, or two, an expert, or two, an anchor, mostly anchor women in Germany, critical questions in any case. From yesterday, sitting at the PC, multimedia center. Yes, we are intellectual people, we Germans, and of course I. But, had I not heard all the arguments that often now, had I not had so often that feeling now, that there was no will to get things really done. Just because it would mean telling the people, the voters, some bitter truths?

"If I could, I would kill DeSantis. He is at least a racist swine like the one we had previously."

I had no interest in turning my head, sitting at the counter, my drink in front of me. I had no interest in starting a conversation with someone who was drunk. I hated drunken people. Okay, not my first drink. I felt the alcohol, but it would be my last one. I was a slow drinker, and this was a problem. My glass was still nearly completely filled, I would still need some time to empty it. But I was not interested in a conversation with a drunken one, so I tried to ignore him.

"If someone had killed him as he came down the escalator, then we wouldn't have had all this trouble."

If we had more voters using their minds, not a wealthy racist white upper class, then such figures wouldn't have a chance to get president. Killing DeSantis, or the other swine, or any of these assholes in Senate? What would this be good for? Like the Hydra, cut off one head, two new ones will appear. Well, Heracles defeated Hydra, but he also could not kill the last immortal head. He buried this head, still, and for all time, alive.

"Believe me, my friend", I said silently, "if it had any meaning, I would be the first to joyfully pull the trigger. But this is the wrong way, at least not after such a long time."

The truth, the truth that everything comes to an end. Europe is no longer the dominator in the world. Not England, Spain, Portugal, or the Netherlands, all those empires no longer exist. The German dream of imperialism caused the death of millions. If Germany ruled the world, then the world would be a happy one. The world of the superior white race. Gosh, DeSantis would have tears of joy in his eyes, even as an American - as a white American!

Peter Maurer, Cook and PI

Working as a cook, to say it prosaically, blessing and curse at the same time. Like some say about L.A., the front yard of hell as well as a kind of paradise - at least on some summer nights. Sometimes it's wonderful to cook, and sometimes it's the worst one can imagine. Sometimes a workplace offers you everything, sometimes it's like being a worker without rights at the beginning of industrialization. And something else cooking is teaching you: Nothing stays forever, a good team, a good workplace, often only for a certain time, but not forever. Cooking means constant change.

Yet, change means more and more negative developments. In my city of birth, the pedestrian area, at the river, nearly only system catering in the American style, shit out of the fridge. And this development will continue, fresh food for those who can still afford it, for the rest the fast food garbage.

"Another drink?", Stephan asked me.

"Yeah, something with mescal", I answered - I was in no good mood. I already had two hard ones, one with overproof rum, one with rye. Sounded maybe not that much, and it maybe appeared to be different, but I was no regular drinker. Nearly only tea at home, mostly coffee on the way, only sometimes a bar and some alcohol. Stephan put a nice glass in front of me.

I loved these girly glasses, was used to a tumbler, a solid glass with a reliable content, preferably with a stirred content. A Dry Martini, a drink for the bucket, but I had to confess, a pleasant glass for the hand. An Alexander in it, a much better way to drink gin, or brandy, of course. A Manhattan?

My thoughts tried to find a better world, and Stephan was a very skilled bartender, knowing that I preferred it to be alone with my drink for the moment.

My last job has been a crappy one, the last few years have been crappy. The pandemic have made it not better, of course, the restaurant business, but honestly, not much more crappy. I would start a new try in a week. A good decision or a bad decision? I had some alternatives, of course, and I have made a decision.

I left the bar, felt the alcohol, would drive home. I would have an appointment later in the day, tomorrow, could be a new case, a new client. I was a private dick in a big city, and I would not improve the world, even if I could solve all my cases. I was one little tiny figure among those many living in this big city, this county, this metropolitan area, the largest in the whole States.

Never Trust A Canary

Living in the European powerhouse, the fourth-biggest economic stronghold in the world after Japan, in front of India? Well, it would depend somewhat on your situation in life, one could say. Or, whatever your situation in life may be, it is much better than in most of the other nations. The USA? In any case! China? Really, really a question? Japan? A nation with many problems. India? You didn't really ask! Interestingly, nations where the people say they are very happy are coming later, like the Scandinavian countries.

And of course, if you are rich, very rich, or super-rich, it's no longer a question of where you live. I would imagine that living as a very rich person in China or India does not necessarily have to be bad. Okay, the USA with their freaked-out religious fundamentalists, but why should one be interested in being there, or even living there, at least as a European? Why should one be interested in living in Germany?

I had reached our meeting point, and you should not call me naive. The pier after midnight, at the very front, where for the next few thousand miles not more than water would follow? And for those not familiar with it, after midnight, the pier was closed. I heard something.

"Nice that you could come, Mr. Maurer."

"Well, you said that you would have crucial information. I'm all ear."

"But first, do you have the money?"

Sure, and meanwhile, he had moved a few steps forward so that I could see him. Or, better, he thought that I hadn't seen him before, but I had. As said, I stood at the very front, had passed the rollercoaster and the Ferris wheel, and had walked down the stairs to be as close to the water as possible. He stood upstairs, I had already seen him as I passed him while walking between the two buildings on the front part of the pier. He had stood in the shadow, but not very masterfully. I threw an envelope on the ground in front of him. He seemed satisfied after picking it and looking at the bills in it.

"Fine, then we can come to our business."

He took a gun out of the inside of his coat - gosh, he really thought that I would be an amateur? I already had my finger on the trigger, the gun in the pocket of my coat, and I pulled the trigger twice as I moved sideways to not be an easy target. But it seemed not necessary, he gave a shout as at least one of my bullets hit him. He did not pull the trigger once, was he really that surprised that I was prepared?

As I heard him moaning, I approached him carefully, saw him lying in a not so little amount of blood. Ensuring that he was no longer a danger was the first thing I did, and then I took the envelope. Too much money to waste it.

"Chest?"

He could not really answer me, too much pain.

"Tell your boss, if you pull through, that I'm no idiot. And I take this personal. I do not like it if someone tries to kill me."

I called an ambulance, as I reached the street, not certain about what chances he really had. I looked

at the ocean, the big ocean, half of Earth's surface. It was nice walking down Ocean Avenue, and I could hear the ambulance from afar.

Being A Part Of Society

You have to have a job, earning money, making your living, and being a part of society. Yeah, that's what they had told me as a child, but I had figured out their lies. All the TV, the lies of the big companies, have a Coke and you feel the freedom - fuck, I not wanna feel it, I wanna have it!

"You're interested?"

It does not seem that he meant this as a real question.

"It's a big deal of money."

"And do not forget. Working for the governor, having the governor as a friend is more worth than the biggest pile of money."

And that wasn't even a lie, at least in a corrupt state like this one, with it's single star.

Beginning a new job, yeah, awaiting the little surprises, this time maybe really only little surprises and a job for the rest of the days? Well, working in a dying sector, jobs galore, but they got shittier with every year. An excellent apprenticeship, but who was still interested in? More and more in the American style, shit out of the fridge, all produced centralized, you had only to open packages, make it hot or fry. Who was still interested in that you could do everything on your own, too expensive nowadays, optimizing the profit was the key word.

"I have to apologize, but I cannot accept your offer."

I felt like sitting in front of Marlon Brando, only the cat was missing.

"I fear that you're making a big mistake."

He doubted not a second his own words.

"Yeah, I know. But you know what's the best thing about our state?"

"Sure, but as an interested politician, I'm always interested in the opinions of my voters."

I would have liked hitting my fist in his grinning right-winger visage.

"The further south you travel, the nicer the state gets."

The desire for security, social and economic security, what would be the price you're willing to pay?

Admiring those who risked something and longing for security.

"You're a dead man, Mr. Maurer. And that none of my critics can misinterpret me. Of course, economically dead."

The Real Stable Nations

Germany, I think, while sitting at the desk, Germany seems always to be a stable nation, but isn't this a fallacy? It becomes more and more visible to everyone that all these promises aren't true. To endeavor pays, learning pays, that's why the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, the richer do more for their individual wealth. The farce of the neoliberal fairy tales.

We are unable to start a basic discussion about what should be the aim of the state as such, apart from protecting the wealth of the richest. Twenty percent are voting for the right-wingers now, more in the East and less in the West. Funny, apart from the FDP ((neo-)liberals) the AfD (right) is the most neoliberal party in Germany, even more than the CDU/CSU (conservatives). But maybe this is also a part of democracy, I think, while watching a video on YouTube, that you can vote, out of frustration and protest, irrationally.

I sat in my office, doing paper work, not in the street to hunt a bad guy. Bad guys, the really bad guys, who would you have to hunt? The American juridical system, could it be that, at last, the state could resist its most dangerous threat since its existence? Could it be that the conservative hypocrisy could burst like a bubble? Wow, that would be like in a kitschy novel, it was hard to believe. Like a fifteen-year-old with cancer playing as an eighteen-year-old at the female soccer

world championship. We Americans loved such stories, forgetting that they, happened in fact in reality, but very rarely. The stories normally ended differently, more like a film noir. But hey, had we not all built our own dreamland around us? I dreamt about this one big case, other people dreamt about being a writer, a film star, or at least a fucking reality star. We all needed these little dreams, even if we knew that they would never turn into reality. I played in the lottery.

A Tale Of Two Nations

We are in panic, yet again, just as we Germans like it. It could be that - again - certain drugs for kids could run low over the next winter. Okay, we have new laws that require drug companies to build up a certain supply so that enough drugs should always be available. Does this cool us down? Why, we're Germans!

Fun fact? The problem is not that the companies cannot produce enough drugs, they produce far enough. But the drug prices in Germany are mandated, drug companies cannot make their own prices, not demand higher prices during a crisis. Drug prices in nations around us, not to mention the USA, are higher or even much higher. Therefore, the companies try to sell as much as possible abroad, they are not so interested in selling them in Germany at a lower price.

Well, give us the slightest reason to be in panic.....we Germans are like chickens. Gosh, if we lived in Africa, we would all die of heart attacks!

"Hey man, I needed the money to buy pills for my son. He has this rare illness, but we cannot afford the medicine. Please, let me go."

"You have stolen the money from an old man with a fucking low pension. Do you think that this is cool?"

"What shall I do? What do you propose, sir? Robbing a gas station, or why not a bank? Hey, I could steal it from a rich white guy? Whatever, if they do not shoot me down immediately, I will be in prison for a fucking long time. Let me go, man!"

He had the money still with him, at least most of it - I would add the rest when I gave it back to the old man. And I? I was the good guy - or. Well, I did not hand him over to the police, but he still did not have the money to buy the needed drugs for his son. Luck living in the USA, They give a shit on you and your problems unless you have the right skin color and enough money at the bank - had given him a phone number and an address.

I felt lousy that evening and was in the mood to get sloshed. So I drove home and tried to forget my thoughts while drinking herbal tea.

Tomorrow Will Be Easy!

"Only stew tomorrow, one with meat, one vegetarian. You will need much more from the one with meat."

"And I have to prepare the braised beef for Sunday, right?"

"Sure. The cauliflower-cheese patties would be good, if possible."

"Should be no problem."

"Should be no problem," I said, knowing that it wouldn't be that easy. But, you cannot be successful when you always see only the difficulties - not in my job at least.

"Fine, you will keep me informed?"

"I will give you regular updates. You will also always be informed about my next steps." Gosh, of course this was not true, not a lie in that gravity, but do not further complicate it as needed. I would provide him with the information he needed to stay calm, and I would do the rest.

Born In The U.S.A.

Born In Germany

Had a new job, but always the same stress. Not enough staff, you should do more, all the uncertainties about the further developments. Okay, for this line of business a good payment, and more would be possible. I planned my retirement in six or seven years, should I get more relaxed? It was 2023, and I had two major problems: The next American presidential election and the war in Ukraine. Both had the potential to spoil everything. The fear of a conservative president, not to imagine that it could be the last one again, and the fear of a Russian victory. The second half of 2023, I wished it would be the end of 2024.

"I hate communists, they try to destroy our American democracy. And the worse, they are not all such douchebags as Spillane lets them look like. But on the other hand, I could have to shoot in self-defense."

"I have my hands up, Mr."

"Yeah, and I my finger on the trigger."

"You're one of these McCarthy trolls - you're a communist, you're bad."

"I have elected Truman, but this not means that communists are acceptable!"

I hated these communists, this Russian shit! Yeah, might be that capitalism wasn't the best, but at least we did not let millions of our citizens starve to death. I had elected Truman?

Yeah, I did not see him as a communist, right after WWII, the bomb, his relation to Stalin? During the war, all had been easy. On one side the evil, on the other side the allies. But everything had become more and more difficult now, who was the enemy today, who your ally? Whatever, maybe during the war, but now we had to defend our convictions, and they did not fit to communism.

In my youth, the left-wing terrorists from the RAF (Red Army Fraction). Today? The threat from the radical right-wingers, neo-Nazis, radicals in the parliament, as in most European nations. Yeah, get rid of the radicals, of all kind and color, but this seemed not to be possible for our understanding of living together.

Born In The U.S.A.

A nation in a big crisis, maybe worse than as the Civil War. A war in the United States today, 2023? Yeah, not like 1861 until 1865, fought on the open field, but not less brutal, with even more dead. And, not only the threat regarding a division, the treat of a complete destruction of the American democracy and soul.

"I have the feeling that all I have done I shouldn't have done, and the only what I haven't done I should have done. The point is, I have done it the same way as every day since I'm here, only that our late shift is back from her vacation since Monday."

"A mistrial, what a shit is this?"

"Two white guys and a black guy, would it be a difficult task to guess who is accused and who is the victim?"

"Not that much, I would say."

I took a sip of my cocktail, was this about racism, or what? Well, in this nation? I would bet on racism, much better odds.

A New Case

"Well, so you think that he's still in town."

"Yeah, this fucking motherfucker. I get pregnant, and he boogies."

"What do you hope will happen if I can find him?"

"Are you shitting me? He had his fun, now I have the bill - fuck, he has to pay for the child."

She pointed on her big belly, and I was not very convinced that he would pay one nickel for the kid. Even if I did find him, I most likely would, if still in town.

"Okay, I can work for you, you know my fee?"

"Can I pay when you have found him?"

"You mean, I find him, and then he will pay me?"

"Yeah."

"I have the feeling that this will become a very bad deal for me."

"Okay, sir! I have heard that you would be a very loyal private dick, no matter what color one has! But it seems that you're not a whit better than all the other white guys. Always talking big but, in the end, doing nothing. Fuck you!"

If some thought that the conversation had been over therewith, in a way it was only the beginning. Yeah, I could understand her in a way, but I was no police officer, not Superman. Another black child would be raised without a father, or was it more a question about income, if there was any income at all? Was it on me as a white man to ponder about it, or should I be better off dreaming of a suburban fantasy land? On my way to turning fifty-nine, never married, no children, and was always single. The best basis for being the perfect marriage counselor.

Fifty-eight, on my way to fifty-nine, the third job this year, end of August. Never married, no children, always a single man. It was funny, I have done some things for decades now, collecting or observing variable stars, for instance, but other aspects shouted out "discontinuity" very loudly. The perfect example was my working life.

I opened my eyes and saw her lying next to me. Yeah, the white master fucks his young nigger slave. What an idea that the mistress would have sex with a nigger boy. Until today, this nation was obsessed with interracial porn. The white man fucks a hot nigger bitch, and a nice white girl gets fucked by a huge nigger cock. The paranoia of the whites, that one day the blacks could be master and mistress, maybe even president and first lady. The constant presence of the black danger, the rapist, the thief, the murderer, the drug dealer. The black men with heavy guns storming the American values of the white ruling class, the white class had to fight back.

Very hot in Germany, I would need a new refreshment under the shower soon. It was hard to do anything, not to mention working, in a hard job. I drank too little, ate too much ice cream, and would have to brew myself a new Chinese green tea. Yeah, it was hard these days, a change in the weather was predicted, but not before the weekend. Yeah, it's hard these days.

Some lost everything, some by flooding, some by a hurricane, and some by wildfires. Well, it was good to live in the richest nation on earth, where they gave a shit about you and your problems. Unless it affects a tourist attraction or some rich guys.

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I always yammered about everything, could not decide, always feared to do the wrong thing. And I would be happy to say: Well, this all has changed, now I'm an entirely different person. But nothing had changed, I was unable to change significantly.

"Fuck, what are you doing! You cannot simply kill me!"

"Says who?"

"We're living in a state of law. What if you have the wrong guy?"

"You're Jack, or. Right, you're Jack, and Jack is the bad guy. It's simple, or."

I pulled the trigger and I felt nothing. No triumph or so, felt not bad. I simply pulled the trigger. Then I entered my car and drove back to the city.

"How much?"

"Depends on your interests."

"I have killed a fucking swine, only just. The guy the press called "The Slut-Killer"."

"You're kidding me – who are you?"

"I'm a lousy private dick. But I got a tip and I found him. I had no case, so I thought, why not hunt him down?"

"Well, in this case I would say: Be my guest, whatever your wishes are."

"Someone holding me tight, would be nice."

A Real Tough Guy

My bullet had hit his shoulder, the side he had held his weapon, now lying on the ground.

"Give up, Fraser! My next shot will gun you down," he was still able to be up.

"What will you do, being Judge Dredd?"

"No, I'm no judge, and I will not pass any judgement on you. But I will also protect my person."

"Do you think that I'm still a threat to you? Hey, I have no longer a gun and, to be honest, difficulties to even standing upright."

Yeah, sure, did he think that I was a greenhorn? Like a wolf. Hurt, even more dangerous as anyway. I was totally focused, awaiting his next step.

"You know," he started. "You know that I have to confess that I have underestimated you?"

What I would not do, as he collapsed. He breathed hard as he laid on the ground, a mourning was to hear, I did not move – realized that he was watching me carefully from the corner of his eyes. As I acted not as he wished, he became suddenly very active. He grasped with his unhurt shoulder a small gun hidden at his ankle – small, but very effective at a small distance. My bullet hit his head. In fact, he had no chance. Other than, that he would have forborne such a nonsense. I called the police, an ambulance wasn't necessary anymore.

I opened my eyes, why I was always such an insecure person? It had become better with the time, remembering all the events when I started extremely to sweat. In restaurants, when people looked at me, when people realized that I was there, if I was – whyever – in the focus. I was able to manage it today to no longer sweating that much, at least in most circumstances. But inside, I often felt not that much differently inside.

War!

A war in Ukraine, now a war in Israel, not much a time to be happy. An unclear situation at the workplace, I had become old. I only pondered on, why not get rid of all that shit. But how, without ending everything?

At the end of the tunnel there was a bright light, in the form of a foreign city, at the small ocean. And yeah, there was this arousing lady overseas, living at the large ocean, but the nation she lived in.....?

"You fought overseas? In Europe or against the Japanese?"

It was one of these bar conversations you not always could omit.

"Yeah, first in Europe, later in the Pacific. But as I arrived, the war there was nearly over."

"They had dropped the bomb?"

"Not as I arrived, but not long thereafter."

"You have killed some Nazis?"

"I have also killed some civilians."

"This is war, you cannot always avoid such incidents. And, weren't these fucking Germans not all Nazis at the end?"

"If it were this easy. They also had a resistance movement, not a few got arrested or executed. But yes, most of the Germans, if not in fact real Nazis, at least looked away. But this seems not to be exclusively German."

"Are you defending these fucking German Nazis?"

He was not boozed, but was near to it. A dangerous state.

"Many fled to America and other nations. Wasn't this also Germans?"

"Yeah, okay, seen in this light."

I did not like having conversations in bars, I did not like it at all to have too many conversations. Sure, for the job, with my clients, as private investigator, but apart therefrom? I emptied my glass, gave Stefan a sign that I would pay the next time, gave my "partner" at the bar a nod, and left the bar.

Yeah, I had killed not only a few Nazis, and one day we hit a building and killed a whole family. Yeah, it was wartime. And yes, we had not begun with the shit. But, should this mean that everything should be a mere trifle? Six days after I had arrived, we dropped the bomb, the first one. How many families died at this very moment, and a few days later? Would there have been an alternative? Maybe if the Germans had not elected Hitler and cheered the Nazis? I had German roots. Would I have been a Nazis if my family hadn't emigrated? If it were that easy. The Great Dictator.

The Suffering Of The Palestinians

Yes, we Germans suffered a lot during WWII. Many German cities were totally destroyed, and the number of civilian casualties was devastating. After WWII, Germany was divided into a western and eastern part. Yes, it was a depressing time for the Germans.

"Shouldn't I name you with your real name, Franz?"

"What can I do so that you realize that I'm not this "Franz". My names is Heinz, Heinz Gärtner. Or do you think that all Germans have been Nazis?"

"You've elected this Hitler in any case. It has been your decision to choose this path. Nobody has forced you."

"We had no other chance. It's easy for you to speak that way in a free nation like the USA."

"Who forced you to vote for Adolf? Sure, at a certain point, it was too late, but it was the Germans' decision to get to this point. But let us stop with this nonsense, Franz. Some, maybe many, Germans simply did as they would see and understand nothing, today they act like they would be the victims. But some Germans, perhaps many, acted like swine. How many Jews have you betrayed to the Nazis, Franz?"

"I'm not this Franz!"

"And the worst? You did not even do it because you are a Nazi, you did it out of pure greed! The Nazis paid you for every Jew they could send to the gas chambers because of your "fine work". And you made a good deal of money. And you were clever, you pissed off early enough to come to the States with good filled pockets. But that's not the way it functions."

"I'm a patriotic citizen, soon I will be a real American citizen. You should be careful. It will be a delight for me to defend myself in court. You have nothing in hand except your gun."

"If you think so - what do you think, Mosche?"

A silhouette came out of the darkness of the night.

"This is Franz Stangl, I'm absolutely sure. But he will have a fair trial."

"Franz Stangl, this is Mosche Merzig, he will be your travel escort."

"In which city will my trial be? This is a farce."

"Jerusalem, I would say. But not Jerusalem, New York. Jerusalem, Israel."

"You can't do this!"

"But Mosche can do."