

# **Days in Los Angeles I**

**February the First, 2018  
until  
February the Ninth, 2018**

## February the First

We will arrive at LAX on time, it's 1:10 p.m. local time now, and Los Angeles is unfortunately very cloudy today. The pilot had announced it, so it was no wonder that one could not see nearly anything of the city during the approach. Only for a brief moment was a glimpse from high above possible, but was this in fact Los Angeles as such, or maybe a suburb or so? It was disappointing in any case, especially not to see the ocean - one had seen so much during the flight so far. From Frankfurt northward, over England, passing Iceland, and over Greenland. Then Canada, for a long time Canada, and finally the United States. An interesting fact was that the flight from Frankfurt to the Canadian coast lasted as long as the flight from there to Los Angeles. If this did not tell you something about the extreme dimensions of these two nations? Two nations, one continent.

Well, cloudy in Frankfurt, the rest of Europe, and over England as well. There was not much I could see, sitting at the window. But I considered it not very tragic. Germany, Europe, especially England? No, this was not so interesting. What was exciting was that I sat in the largest passenger airplane in the world. My last flight was decades ago, as an eighteen-year-old, to London - my second flight. My first was with my parents to Spain as a school kid. So, this was my third flight, and it would take eleven and a half hours! As I booked it, I was not totally sure if I would enjoy such a long flight. But with every hour, it was more beautiful to sit in this enormous aeroplane. Four rows in the middle, two aisles, to both sides, three further rows - then rows in total! And this was only the lower floor. The higher priced seats were above us.

It became wonderful, the soft sound of the massive engines. It felt like gliding, much more quiet and comfortable than sitting in a train - over ten thousand feet high, nearly at the speed of sound. Most beautiful was the night, had not seen Iceland, many slept, but I wanted not to miss any second, any second of the eleven and a half hours! And now we were above Greenland, Greenland at night. It was a huge white mass surrounded by black, the ocean. And then I could see it, around the "edge", but only in the south, small lights, sparsely set. Cities, should we call it a city? A settlement, settlements? It was impressive to see how huge this land was, and how marginal the signs of human life.

Then the ocean again, blackness, if not clouds. Clouds, another very impressive moment had been, as we flew through the clouds as we started. The aeroplane was surrounded by clouds, like in a deep, white ocean. And then, the moment as the aeroplane broke through the clouds, a water surface of white clouds was under us, and the sun glared.

From time to time, a stewardess walked by, not always the same. Such a long flight, the cabin crew worked in shifts, they had a special location to rest or sleep. And sure, she looked to see if everything was okay. Whether someone would need something. And, such a long flight, we got regular meals. And we were offered, of course, something to drink several times. Apart from that, there was a kitchen where you could ask for coffee, water, or even a snack - then we reached the Canadian coast.

Still night, after half the flight? It was a very long night - we flew ahead of the sun. The time shift would be nine hours at the end. Nine hours earlier than at home, we would have won nine hours. Of course, on the way back to Frankfurt, the night would be very short, and we would lose the nine hours again. Flying towards the sun this time, through the night. Now we flew with the night.

Canada, it was still dark and somewhat cloudy, and I had no distinct information, but I understood that underneath I could see the Hudson Bay. The form was such a characteristic, as was the enormous size. The shape - some argued that a meteorite would have created the Hudson Bay. But, as far as I knew, no distinct proof could have been found so far. Canada, I understood now, fewer clouds, and snow. Snow, snow, snow, and sporadically a light. It was nearly as flying over Greenland, only that the lights were larger, sometimes real cities, but always an enormous amount of landscape. Even from high above, the cities, or towns, were scattered, making it really a very empty land. I started to ponder, how would it be to live here, or even further north, not in the east or west, at or near the coasts, towards the US border? I was sure that this would be no life for me, like in Scandinavia, very much to the pole. It became very cloudy again, and I started for a moment to

get tired. I walked to the kitchen, a stewardess there. I got a coffee and chose salted crackers for a snack. It was such a massive plane, you could have a nice walk in it - even some babies were on board. I thoroughly enjoyed the flight now - still hours until our destination.

It had been very cloudy for a while, and I had missed some. But what was obvious was that we no longer flew ahead of the sun, more or less westward, but now southward. The sun was very fast, it became day outside the plane. I had thus missed the distance from Canada to the USA. I had missed the woods at the border, what I saw now was very different. Desert? I wasn't sure, but the brown color of the soil seemed to indicate just this. And, it would fit to our flight route.

I should possibly point to two aspects. It was the A380 from Airbus. With a monitor in front of me at the backside of the seat in front of me. I could always see where the plane was - flying over a simple map. But I was not that good at American geography. Okay, maybe better than some Americans - please excuse that arrogance - but I was not such an expert. Okay, this should be, under me, Nevada, Las Vegas, the desert - that would fit. Whatever, no longer snow, endless snow, endless woods, but endless soil, and again, not much human settlement could be seen. And if so, then they seemed not pretty much large. This had not changed, from Canada to the US. The USA also a land with a lot of empty landscape, so much different than in Germany.

In Germany, when leaving one city or town, you had not to drive long to the next. Five minutes, perhaps ten. What I knew was that the size of California fitted very well with the size of Germany, somewhat larger, but with half of the inhabitants. And, in California, one huge metropolitan area, Los Angeles, and then the region of San Francisco, and maybe the region of San Diego. Most of the Californians lived there. The rest of the state was extremely diverse. We had many more cities and towns in Germany. And this was California, the largest state in population. Some states, as far as I knew, much larger than California, had not even the number of inhabitants of the city of Los Angeles! You would have plenty of landscape without people there.

But would I like to live there? As in Canada, not that cold, but living in a desert? I could not imagine this, as well as living on my land, on my farm or so, and the next village would be many miles away - the heartland. I was used to the circumstances in Germany.

But I got somewhat tired again. Was it the monotonous landscape that I had looked down on for hours now? I had not slept one minute during the flight, and I had stood up early, to travel to the airport, to be there early, check in, customs, waiting for the plane. I would be soon a whole day awoken. But it had been a wonderful day, and I felt that I would fall asleep soon.

I started to listen to the noise around me with closed eyes. There was much more bustle on the plane since it was day again. There was still the soft sound of the engines. I listened, it was very relaxing to sit here. Then the announcement that we would reach Los Angeles soon, very cloudy.

The cabin crew had to take their positions. We would touch down soon, only clouds to see. Some glimpses of an urban area, suddenly very near, Los Angeles? It was to feel how much the plane slowed down, the ground should be near, but still in the clouds? Then suddenly, clouds away, I could see the runway! A second later, we touched down - clouds? It would have been better to say mist or something like low-hanging clouds. Whatever, my travel was over, and I had an unclear feeling. It was sad not to have seen Los Angeles from above, or only for some glimpses. Mostly, not to have seen the ocean. But happy to be here now, my first real long trip! I had arrived! Okay, first, all the procedures again. Customs, I needed my luggage again, suchlike. But then I would step out of the airport, and then I would be there - Los Angeles! I had arrived!

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Well, maybe I had been somewhat too optimistic. It seemed as though the plane would do some sightseeing with us. In Frankfurt, the way from the parking position to the runway hasn't been very short. But here at LAX, it seemed as though the plane would never reach or find its parking position. Overall, it did, but it needed much more time as in Frankfurt.

The A380, the world's largest passenger airplane, I sat in the back part of the plane at a window. The conclusion? It would take some time if I could leave the plane. Therefore, I did not stand up, like

many others, I kept my seat until the plane started to empty, and it was easy to get your carry-on luggage - I left the plane and said goodbye to the board crew, the stewardesses. Yeah, stewardesses in their uniforms - a topic for longer writing. Lufthansa, in their blue uniforms. Lufthansa allowed their female members of the board crews to choose between a skirt or trousers. Well, what should I say? Maybe nothing.

We walked first through corridors until we reached a long escalator downward. But not the escalator was the interesting matter. While gliding down, you looked at a wall with a gigantic American flag - welcome to America! Right away, it was kitschy, but at the same time beautiful - I liked it! But not the following.

The next stop would be customs. The way was not difficult to find, and there were not many people in this part of the airport right now. It was easy to imagine that this would be very different at peak season. But, maybe because, not only one time we got asked to hurry, someone pointed hastily in a direction, it was not possible to stay for a moment and to look at the place. I had the feeling that this would be very unnecessary. I reached the customs.

Well, you had to do it on your own! APC, automated passport control - I started to get nervous. I looked at the machine in front of me and started to read. Two fingers I had to scan - fingerprints. The first time in my life! My passport as well. I had to look into a camera. Did they take a photo? Face recognition? The photo in my passport was not exactly like how I looked today - I became even more nervous and failed! The machine told me that I would have to do the regular customs procedure.

The customs as such was not difficult to find, I had constantly seen it. Those who were happy could leave this area effortlessly. Those like me had to queue. I stood in a line now and waited to be next so that one of the customs officers would speak with me. But the queue was long, and I had some time.

The first thing that was in my mind was that I had the impression that strikingly many in the queue had beards and looked Arabic. Whole families stood there. But maybe this was not totally exact. Then I heard two young women speaking German. That cooled me down somewhat. They had also not managed it.

Then I pondered on ESTA, the "electronic system for travel authorization". You no longer need a visa, you could do it online, rapidly. One had to, among others, answer questions. Very funny questions, like: Do you plan a terrorist attack in the USA? Yeah, sure! I'm a Taliban - you know me very well! Why are you asking such questions? Or, if you're a druggie. I really had some problems not marking such questions "yes". But of course, I marked "no". The point was, as the queue in front of me started to shrink, that I had also read about the customs procedures at airports. You have to be earnest there, and you have to answer every question very correctly. If the customs officer is not satisfied with your answers, or he even has the feeling you take this not serious, then it can happen very fast, and you fly back home again. I started again to become very nervous - I was the head of the queue now.

As I stood in front of the customs officer, a middle-aged African American man, I tried to concentrate. My English skills I had improved over the years - it had been the subject with the worst grades over my time in school - but I wasn't perfect. So I hoped that it would cause no communication difficulties. But the first thing that I had to do was give him my passport, then all ten of my fingerprints - now the US had ten more than the German authorities. The next was a photo, and then he started questioning me.

Where I'm from, as if this was not obvious, what my profession was, as if he would not have the information given by ESTA. But I understood that maybe it was not about repeating what he already knew. It was the way I would do it. Yes, vacation, yes, the first time in the USA, yes, the whole month. We talked about the German kitchen - yes, schnitzel. It felt a bit like a game, but then he seemed to be satisfied, and he told me that all was okay and that I could go to the luggage claim. I was disoriented for a moment - inside me was turmoil. The customs officer noticed this and showed me the way. I had to use an escalator downward. I said thank you and added, like over the entire communication, a "sir".

This was in the luggage claim now and I found my luggage conveyor belt easily. Nobody was there - well, it had needed some time, the queuing and questioning. The first piece of luggage that I saw had a ribbon around its handle - a red ribbon. "Toxic" was to read! This, I thought, was a bit scary. Was it a mark that this luggage had to be examined? What if my luggage also had such a band? Then I saw my luggage, without a band, and I grabbed it - what way now?

But this way was also easy to find. A sign showed me where I had to walk. In the background, I saw a glass door, a glass facade, and a street I could see behind. I have nearly done it, I thought, but there was still one problem. Between me and the street, I had to pass again customs officers. They were obviously there to examine the luggage. One place to the left, one to the right, one officer to the left, one to the right, and I had to walk through there in between. Yeah, my luggage was not toxic, but I started to get nervous again. I approached them, and they spoke with each other. Closer, they still spoke with each other. What should I do? Simply walking through, or had I to stop so that they could examine my luggage? I was very near now, and they seemed not to be interested in me. I slowed down, nearly stopped, and looked at one of the customs officers. It seemed as though they had not noticed me so far. The customs officer looked at me and gave me a sign that I should go on. I was a bit puzzled, but then I continued my way - do not look back - reached the glass door, the glass door opened, stepped out, and I was in Los Angeles. - Yes, I was in Los Angeles!

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What I had not done much was read about Los Angeles, especially nothing for tourists. I was not interested in the tourist's stuff, I was interested in the city as such. But, of course, I had also planned some aspects of the journey. Of course, the motel, and the flight, but also how to come from the airport to the motel. A taxi would be possible, of course, but would be expensive. Public transport? I did not dare. The solution I had found was the FlyAway bus from LAX to Union Station. Okay, Union Station would not be my aim, but I would have done most of my way. I would use a taxi for the rest, even if the Metro would also be possible. But again, I did not dare. The FlyAway bus also had one advantage. I had nothing more to do than wait until the next one came. So I waited in front of the airport, taxis passed as well as other buses, and not long after, I saw a bus marked as FlyAway bus - it stopped.

Passengers left the bus, got their luggage, and I waited until the procedure was over. Then the bus driver came to me to fetch my luggage and stow it away. Then he asked for my ticket - I hadn't one. I had thought that I would get one on the bus, but there would have been a ticket machine in the airport. I started yet again to get nervous. Did he notice it? Well, he told me very politely that it would be no problem at all. I could buy one at the Union Station after we arrived. Thus, I entered the bus, sweated a bit, and decided for a seat - not many were on the bus. As the bus pulled away, I started to feel better again.

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I had some rough knowledge about Los Angeles and the different parts of the city - Google Earth. The airport at the beach, Union Station was somewhat east of midtown Los Angeles, near Chinatown. And I had read that Los Angeles would not exist as such, as a city with a distinct center. It would be more of a conglomeration of different areas, neighborhoods, quarters, and suburbs, all running into each other and all with their own centers. And, I had no idea what exact route the bus would take.

We started to leave the area of the airport and soon entered one of the freeways. I knew, as well, that there were several freeways that cut through the city and separated different parts of the city. In Germany, one with six tracks was considered huge. If I had counted correctly, then the freeway near Downtown L.A. had sixteen tracks! One of the reasons why I would use public transport. My next thought was, as suddenly all the clouds and haze disappeared, that the bus would drive

very fast - no more clouds and haze? Okay, looking up, I still saw clouds, but all near the ground were no longer there! It seemed as though this would concentrate on the beach area, whereas the rest of the city was clearly visible now - I saw the Hollywood sign! Okay, from far away, but I would also have no interest in seeing it from closer. I did not see me as a tourist, was not interested in the tourists' stuff. Especially not for the Hollywood sign and all around. Fifty percent Latinos, I would be interested to see this in Los Angeles.

But we were on the freeway now and passed along the skyline of Los Angeles. The famous skyscrapers downtown, the few high houses in Los Angeles - this ocean of low houses. In a way, I had to confess that it was fascinating but, at the same time, boring. Such buildings, hotels, banks, and insurance companies could be seen in every larger city around the world - Frankfurt, for example. I would not have to fly to Los Angeles for such things. But the fifty percent Latino population, Chinatown, Koreatown, Crenshaw, and the like seemed the right reason to me.

We changed direction, sure. We otherwise would have passed our aim, Union Station. And we left the freeway, and I had no idea anymore where we were. The bus slowed down, entered a compound, and I recognized the tower - this was Union Station. We had reached our destination. The bus stopped at this halt, and the passengers started to leave the bus to fetch their luggage. I as well, but I still had the problem with the ticket - I became nervous again. What must I do now? I waited until all the other passengers had their luggage and realized that I wasn't the only one without a ticket. So, the bus driver told us that we had to buy a ticket first. At the counter around the corner. I followed the others, and my next issue appeared.

I used cash in Germany typically and, occasionally, my bank card. But this was the USA. Thus, I owned, for the first time, a credit card but had never used it so far. The problem was that it was only possible to pay for the ticket with a credit card, not with cash. I became more nervous when I noticed that the people in front of me just handed the credit card to the person at the counter. Now it was on me to pay.

The woman behind the counter asked me if I would also need a ticket for the way from LAX to Union Station, and I affirmed her question. Then I did what all the others had done. I gave her my credit card. And it did not take long before I got the card back, together with my ticket. I started to relax somewhat. It had functioned!

Back to the bus, I handed the ticket to the bus driver, and he gave me my luggage. I had managed the next part of the journey - I had reached Union Station! The next thing I would need was a taxi to finally reach my motel. I oriented for a moment, then I saw where I had to go.

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Union Station, not much I had read about Los Angeles. But something about Union Station - Wikipedia. And I had looked at it - Google Earth. I knew, thus, that the FlyAway bus had its stops on one side of the tracks, where the tower was, but the station as such was on the other side. I would definitely get a taxi there. So, I had to find an underpass, and I saw it.

I had to walk down a rap and I found a nice location. A large picture, I wasn't really sure if I could understand the message. The hall as such, very high and bright, an impressive half glass dome - and a counter of the Metro. One other issue that I had investigated was how to use the Los Angeles public transport, especially the Metro. I had learned that I could buy a TAP card. One could use all public transport with this card for two weeks. And you could easily reload it. Well, I had managed to get it to buy me a FlyAway ticket, why not just outright the TAP card as well, the counter was there.

Not many in front of me, I had not to wait long with my luggage. So I told the woman behind the glass what I wished, a TAP card for two weeks. A pro now, saying these words, I handed her my credit card. It functioned! I got my TAP card, and headed on to use the underpass.

On the other side, another hall, not so impressive. One could get his shoes cleaned to my left, and could find the restrooms. A larger stall to my right. You could buy bezels there, but they did not exactly look like real German bezels. Large and soft, not compact and crispy. A shop for travel

necessities was also there - had I said that I had read about the Union Station?

The Union Station, the famous hall of the Union Station, I had to see it, and had to stride through it anyway, as I saw now. And, in fact, in reality, even more beautiful and impressive than in the pictures. Well, but I had to realize then that, for instance, the comfortable leather armchairs were only for travelers using Amtrak! As well as a bar and a restaurant, only for Amtrak travelers. But there was also a nice-looking place, Café Crêpe. This place seemed for everyone, and I pondered for a moment if I should have a coffee there and a snack. But I had other plans. To reach the motel first, then to eat something. Thus, I left all behind, left the station, and there it was!

A plaza in the sunshine, palm trees, of course, all nicely looking, even if somewhat artificial. However, the message was clear. Now, just right now, I had reached my destination. Now I was ultimately in Los Angeles, with the American flag to my right. Sure, a taxi was no problem. I told the driver the address of the motel, and we started the ride.

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The taxi left the plaza in front of Union Station, and we underpassed the freeway - a freeway. Well, of course, there was not only one freeway in this large city. There were several of them. We kept the direction for a moment, the traffic was not extreme. Then we cut right, kept this direction for a longer time, then left again, and I had no real idea where we were. Some interesting buildings, high, were we in Downtown L.A. now? Well, I would have a whole month to find out - we turned right again.

The next freeway, but this time we crossed the freeway, a glimpse of the skyline, this has to be the freeway we used to reach Union Station with the bus. Up the hill, a stadium to my right?, looked like a school. Down again, up again, Los Angeles seemed to be surprisingly hilly, so near the ocean. Well, sure, it was not San Francisco, but I was somewhat surprised. And, suddenly, Los Angeles looked like Los Angeles - low houses, no high buildings anymore. And a lot of billboards, like in a movie.

We continued our way, up and down, passed motels and - Gus's Drive-In. Now I knew again where we were, more or less, but this was 3rd Street. I planned to have my dinner there later. Up again, a supermarket or so, at right, then we turned left, and down once more. A shorter way, and the taxi entered the parking lot of a motel. This part of the journey was also over. We had reached the Travel Inn.

It was a simple motel, but it was the USA - one had to stay in a motel, I would say. And the motel was cheap, whatever this in a city like Los Angeles meant, and well located - at least for me. I was not interested in the ten places one would have to visit if in Los Angeles. I was interested in the people of Los Angeles, the life in Los Angeles, the real Los Angeles. MacArthur Park would be near - the song and the Red Hot Chilly Peppers. The next metro station near, downtown near. It seemed very much in the middle of Los Angeles. A good place to start your daily explorations. At least it seemed so - and it was affordable.

The reception was easy to find - would you call it a reception in a motel? A man with an Indian descent was there. But also, this was not difficult to handle. I paid for the room with my credit card, the third time that day that I used it, but this was America. He handed me the key card for the room, a room on ground level, which was nice. So I entered the room.

Wow, I had seen them often enough in movies, had heard about them in songs, had read about them in novels. An American icon, I would say - a room in a motel. What all had happened in motel rooms? The list would be endless, and the drama would have no end. But, also a lot of fun, love stories and murders. And my motel room? Well, what would one expect from a room in a cheap motel? It looked clean, not bad at all, of course, nothing special. But I needed the room to have a bed to sleep, not more. I would be out all day. I required nothing special. And as said, the room looked clean and absolutely okay. I decided to store some of my clothes first, then to take a shower. And then thereafter, then I would have my first walk in Los Angeles. MacArthur Park, which should be somewhere on the other side of the motel, and dinner at Gus's Drive Inn later. But first, a bit of

work, and then the shower.

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In front of the motel, the way to MacArthur Park was more or less easy. In any case, I had to follow the street downward, as I did, until the next crossing. MacArthur Park, the old song, had it in my mind. Not the lyrics, but the melody - very dramatic. I thought that it might be no mistake to look after the lyrics as well. And then there were the Red Hot Chily Peppers. Nirvana, well, okay, but I didn't like the sound so much, as well as the video, and the lyrics? "Smells like teen spirit", what does this mean? But there were the Red Hot Chily Peppers - what a rhythm, what a sound! The bass and the guitar, the voice and the drums - everything fitted. *Give it away, give it away, give it away, now, give it away, give it away, give it away, now, like the Kaiser.* Okay, to be fair, I also had no real idea what this song was about. But the rhythm was great, as was the video - the still-good days of MTV. I turned right.

A short way, I looked at the shops and restaurants, places you could eat something, waste in a backstreet, until the next crossing, a larger crossing, and there the park was. Opposite, standing at the crossroad, 6th Street and South Alvarado Street, I looked at the signs, was an entrance to MacArthur Park. I knew that the park had two parts - this was America. A park, and you built a street right through it, a large street. Something strange to me. If I had understood it right, one half was for sport, this half, and the other half with the large lake for relaxation. I was interested in the lake. Thus, I followed South Alvarado Street until the next crossing, which was Wilshire Boulevard, to reach the other half of the park, with the lake - and the bridge.

*Under the bridge I gave my life away* - had read that it was the bridge in MacArthur Park that was the inspiration for the song. But downtown? This was not downtown. Well, maybe only a myth, as I saw no bridge at all. *Lonely as I am, together we cry.*

But, as I entered the park, Wilshire and Alvarado, opposite a market on a small plaza, I saw something strange. There were homeless people - no, not they were strange. I knew that Skid Row existed and what it was, that she wore her diamonds there, and that they told tourists not to go there - much too dangerous! Skid Row, it was one of the places I had to go, and I would go. So, no, the matter of seeing homeless people wasn't surprising at all. Even on the way to the park, I had seen two. Both sitting next to a one-person tent. Was this the normal "accouterment" of a homeless person in Los Angeles? Well, mostly warm in Los Angeles, but also cold nights, and sometimes heavy rain. But it's definitely better than freezing to death at the entrance of the subway in New York, I thought. But it seemed nevertheless hard to be a homeless person in Los Angeles as well. MacArthur Park? Well, I had read that one could see homeless people in the whole city, and, of course, Skid Row. However, I had not expected to see MacArthur Park like that. This corner was with trees and benches, ways, not directly the lake - and one tent after the other! The entire area was crowded with homeless people. People sitting next to or in front of their tents, many simply staring at nowhere. I wasn't sure how to react, as I realized that they did not take note of me, that they did not address me, and that they wanted nothing about me. Even if I looked at them, like I would look at an animal at a zoo - I felt ashamed.

I started to round the lake, as I found the bridge, more an underpass under Wilshire Boulevard. This boring underpass as inspiration for such a wonderful song? Hardly likely, I felt.

*Sometimes I feel like I don't have a partner  
Sometimes I feel like my only friend  
Is the city I live in, the City of Angels  
Lonely as I am, together we cry*

*Well, I never worry, now that is a lie*

Then I decided to complete the rounding and to return to the motel. All over the park, there were

countless homeless people. I had never seen anything like that. But nobody seemed really concerned or interested in them. They seemed just to be there, like the next palm tree or so. In such a rich city, such a rich state, and such a rich nation. The American Dream, Californian Dreaming - the harsh reality of a social security system worse than anything in Europe a hundred years ago - I had not slept for how many hours? Days? And I would have to walk the way to Gus's as well?

As I finished my round, I saw a larger plaza, a larger market, and also the entrance to the Metro Station. I would come here often, nearly daily. But now I should return, not much attention left for shops and all that was to see. And much was to see, especially one.

Fifty percent of Latinos, I was interested in, thought that I would search for their neighborhoods. And now, obviously, the people at the market - sellers or buyers - were mostly Latinos. All the people around here, mostly, I would not have to search - and I liked it. Then I saw the sign, huge, above a building: "Westlake Theater". But the building, with an interesting upper facade, was no theater, a swap meet, letters missing - what was a swap meet? "Westlake" one could read, three times, difficult, over the large red letters: SWAP MEE , SV A MEET, SWAP MEET. Under the red letters, one would have found, obviously, "Theater". This had been the entrance to the old theater, an obviously long-bygone time. The time of the old black-and-white movies? Or somewhat later, maybe the 60s? Whatever, this time was gone and I returned to the motel.

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In the motel again, I laid down for a moment, but feared falling asleep. I took again a shower, new clothes, it had gotten dark. And somewhat colder, I decided to take my jacket on. Then I left the motel.

Gus's Drive-Inn - I had searched, still in Germany, for a place to eat something, after I would have arrived, using Google Earth. Gus's Drive-Inn. I thought, at first moment, that this wouldn't be an interesting place - a drive-inn in the United States? But it looked not bad from outside, and I visited their webpage. Not bad-looking either - the menu? Well, sounded not that bad, a good variation of dishes, one could have breakfast as well. Salad with fried fish sounded not bad, a light dinner after the very long day? The pictures from inside, all seemed to be clean - why not try? And it was easy to reach.

I simply had to walk the street of the motel uphill until I reached 3rd Street. Right and downhill, and I would have reached Gus's very fast. So I started, paying not much attention to the shops or anything else around me, but I noticed the supermarket on my way. A larger parking lot, well-visited, most likely long opening times, pick-up trucks - I should go there to see what all they would offer. One and a half blocks more, and I reached Gus's Drive-Inn.

A nice patio, and a sign: Fresh - Healthy - Delicious. Okay, the USA was not necessarily known for having the most healthy eating habits. On the other side, this was California, Los Angeles? I entered the place.

Inside, I needed a moment to orientate. Then it became obvious. I had to walk straight ahead after entering, to a counter, where I had to order my meal. There was a large menu on the wall, and a small stand-up display: Soup of the Day. Well, I knew what I wanted, not interested in the meat or chicken, but why not a soup of the day - Chicken Soup? I had not to eat it, if not tasty. So I ordered the soup of the day, salad with the fried fish, coffee, and fresh squeezed orange juice. I had noticed that they offered fresh squeezed orange juice. I got some orange juice in a plastic cup with a lid out of the fridge, and an empty cup for the coffee. Two large Thermos bottles for coffee to my right - self-service, but most likely as much as I wanted. The woman behind the counter, a young Latina, explained to me that I should sit down, that they would bring me my order. If I could sit outside, I asked, and she affirmed.

As I took my coffee, I looked at the kitchen behind the coffee point. Several gas flames that I could see, not bad, and three or so cooks working at the stove. Seemed as they would cook á la minute. All were Latinos - or? As I walked out, I looked at the guests inside. All seemed to be Latinos, including two police officers. Only one table was occupied outside, two young couples, definitively

Latinos. Well, I had thought that I should search for Latino neighborhoods. It seemed as that I had found them, or at least one. And I liked it.

Not long and I got the soup and the salad. The soup in a larger paper cup, but the soup did not look bad. I tasted it, and it was really fine. Definitely self-cooked, a fine taste of chicken with nice vegetables in it. Fresh vegetables, not cooked dead. Celery as well, a really fine taste. The salad? In Germany? We would not call this salad simply a salad, but a baby-leave salad, and it would be served in an expensive restaurant. Here, in Los Angeles, at Gus's Drive-Inn! The vinaigrette was in a small plastic tray, but this was handy. I could use as much as I wanted, and it was also definitively home-made. The fish? Fine roasted, nice color, and juicy. These cooks definitively knew their job - I was impressed and surprised. And a bit ashamed, that I had assumed that it would most likely not be that good to eat at Gus's Drive-Inn. Another table was occupied now, and their dishes looked also very fine. Chicken and steak, a wrap and I wasn't sure. I should come here more often - soup of the day.

Now I sat on the patio of Gus's Drive-Inn, my first evening in Los Angeles. I have had a very nice dinner, enjoyed the fresh squeezed orange juice, definitely not bought, and a good coffee. I was a bit puzzled. This does not fit to my image of the States and Los Angeles. But was this the Los Angeles that I had planned to find? No asshole steak house one could most likely find downtown. No fucking unhealthy fast-food shit. I would have a month to discover, and I suddenly felt how tired I was. But I felt jazzed as well. I had done it, I was in Los Angeles now, I had tears in my eyes. I would have a very special task tomorrow - two in fact. Visiting my graveyard, and the white house at the beach. Fifty percent Latinos, it maybe had to happen to be among them, if not deciding for a tourist's hotel, not one of the tourist's parts of the city. But I was too tired now to continue pondering. I still had to walk back to the motel. And this time, first uphill, then downhill - why was Los Angeles so hilly? Tomorrow would be a day to find out.

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We will arrive at London Heathrow on time, it's 1:10 PM local time now, sunshine in London today. The pilot had announced it, so we could see a lot of the landscape around London during the approach, and also some of London itself. During the whole short flight, the weather had been nice, and much had to be seen.

Whereby, it had been a short flight, from Stuttgart to London - most time over Germany. And then over the Netherlands, the Channel, and England at the end. And, I was not so good at geography, or, better to say, at the "near" Geography. I knew the world and most of its nations, even if I could not necessarily tell you the exact location of every nation. Nigeria, the neighbors? Okay, I could not tell, but it would be no problem today to find out. And it would be no surprise to me, that you would find Nigeria located near the horizon, Central Africa, often called "Black Africa" in Germany in my youth. In the west, most likely with a coast, but I wasn't sure about that. Thus, I had some idea which German region was below us, but not necessarily exactly which city or so. Okay, as we reached the coast, it was obviously Amsterdam - where would be Rotterdam? Okay, these were my issues.

The English Channel was fast flown across, not very impressing. I was very attracted by water and the sea, and dreamt about living, as an old man, at the ocean. The big ocean, the Pacific Ocean, the West Coast of the USA maybe? Well, I had no connection to countries like Australia or even New Zealand. The USA? Well, no easy nation - very ambivalent were my emotions. Los Angeles, very hot in the summer - San Francisco? More than a setting for rigged songs - flowers and so on? More to the north, towards the Canadian border? Seattle, had never really been my music, and it was icy there in winter. Portland, what did the "Portlanders" say about their city - wasn't it a deeply white city, right? San Diego sounded interesting, but I would die there in the summer. A crazy idea had been staying during the winter in Los Angeles and in the summer on the coast of the New England States. But okay, I would never have been able to afford such a "live-style". Was this London now, below us?

London, larger than every German city, was very extended with its numerous outskirts. I could not say whether this was already London, or not. But maybe this was not so relevant for me? Especially that it did not need that much time so that one could be sure. Yet, Heathrow itself, like most large airports, was not located directly in London - I would have a ride into London later. Although, we began our final landing approach now, and also the cabin crew had to make its final preparations and either sit down - touch-down.

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Well, it was effortless to fetch my luggage, as customs was as well. Okay, I traveled inside the EU. It would most likely have been more difficult for a person coming from outside the EU - England, or, should I say better, the UK and the EU? Well, a slim majority had voted to leave the EU, and it seemed as though the negotiations regarding Brexit could come to an end soon. Seeing Theresa May acting? It was a disaster seeing these conservative "politicians" ruling, of course only in the interest of the British people - and a little bit for their clientele, but only a little bit. But wasn't David Cameron the real idiot? And in the background waited Boris Johnson to take over from Theresa, but of course only if needed and the British people would demand it. And of course, he would only act in the total interest of the British people. What a silly farce this was! But was this important for me, living in Germany?

The Royal Baby could become born during my stay - wasn't this much more significant? Or that in the States still this wannabe Adolf "ruled", and it became worse with every day? And in Germany? Well, Angela, still Angela, and it seemed like Angela forever. After sixteen devastating years of Helmut, now Angela until the day she would die? Should one be happy or sad that this at least pretended stability, simply not talking about all the problems we faced? I would use the Heathrow Express.

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I had, while still in Germany, pondered about how to reach the hotel that I had booked. It was near the Hyde Park, Paddington. Taxis, of course, but costly. The underground, tube? Much cheaper, of course, but I would have to walk a longer way to the hotel, or I would have to change lines more often. But Paddington Station was very near to the hotel, and a Heathrow Express existed - Heathrow Airport until Paddington Station. More expensive than the underground, but cheaper as a taxi? It was very fast, and it ran very frequently - so there was no real question about how I would manage the way from Heathrow to my hotel. And it was, again, an effortless matter, to find my way to the platform of the Heathrow Express. Well, just as I reached the platform, the train left, but I stayed cool. I still had to buy me a ticket, and the next express would depart in just fifteen minutes. So, there was enough time to calmly buy a ticket and to wait for a short time. And in fact, the next train arrived very soon from Paddington, would return to Paddington - I could enter and wait. The train would bring me non-stop to Paddington, and the ride would take exactly fifteen minutes - well, easier than this, it couldn't be. And the train started to move.

We rode underground for some time, but even as we were overground, not that much was to see - well, these typical English houses, suburbs, always these all-the-same-looking rows of English houses. Not much inviting, I thought. Well, sometimes a bit greener or so. I had no idea which suburbs we crossed, or whether this was still London as such. But as said, the whole ride took only fifteen minutes, and then we obviously had reached London - we had reached Paddington Station. So I left the train and started to orientate.

The station was indeed huge, and I had to find the exit - well, follow the others. And, of course, the first thing we had to do was leave the platform. I knew the procedure. You could not simply enter or leave a platform in England. You therefore needed a ticket. But okay, I had one, so I could pass the gate and enter the hall. And now the train station appeared even larger - a really impressive train station. And a beautiful one. The English steel architecture, the beautiful glass roofs? This was

indeed a place worth visiting. Okay, maybe not the cleanest place, but it was a train station - how many would use it every day? And, perhaps, I should firstly walk to the hotel?

The exit was easy to find - not centrally situated, but to your left, and huge. It was, in fact, a broad ramp. A truck could easily use it, and two trucks would be able to easily pass each other. I walked it up and reached the street. It was Pread Street, as a sign said. I had a good idea where I could find my hotel - okay, it should be easy. I would have to follow the street on the other side, straight ahead. And as I looked at the sign - London Street? Come on, this was such a small street? Would you call such a street London Street? But okay, I knew that I would have to follow it the short way until the next traversing street, then I would have to turn left. There would be my hotel - not a very difficult thing to do, maybe ten minutes. Thus, I entered London Street - my first impressions? There were many restaurants here, a green area, and a small fish restaurant offering fish & chips? Well, an offer for my first evening in London? I reached the next street, wider than London Street, with trees on both sides. It was an alley - Sussex Gardens. Yes, there my hotel would be. On the other side, a short distance to my right, there it should be, the Gower Hotel. I did so, looked at a row of houses that looked like Edwardian town houses to me, and nearly all were hotels! Had I any idea what an Edwardian house had to look like, or a town house in London? But okay, I only had to see what would be mine, the Gower Hotel - and I found it. It was the seventh or so in a row of hotels - most of the houses here were hotels. And they all looked nearly the same to me. I entered my hotel.

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Well, sometimes houses or restaurants did not look quite inviting or sophisticated from outside, but if you dared to step in, everything changed quite fast. Then you suddenly got welcomed by a warm and friendly atmosphere, and you realized that the inside was something extremely diverse. Well, but sometimes something looked exceptional from the outside but was much more simple from the inside - like the hotel I entered. Okay, it was okay, but compared with the front outside, the portico only? Well, I had booked a relatively cheap hotel in a city like London, not a five-star luxury hotel, so everything was okay. Everything was very narrow suddenly, the hallway, and not very well illuminated. But as I reached the reception - around the corner - a suddenly more open and brighter room. A man was behind the counter. Since I had arranged everything in advance, it all should be easy. But I ran into difficulties with my credit card. I always used cash in Germany, or a simple bank card. The credit card was for travel only - could it be that I could not remember my PIN correctly? It didn't function. I could not pay, and I started to become nervous and ashamed. But, the man behind the counter managed it so that I could pay without my PIN at the end - this was not a situation I had hoped for. My room would be downstairs.

He accompanied me downstairs, a narrow staircase. I had problems with my luggage and my backpack, as he showed me my room, as well as the breakfast room, on the same level. Well, I thought, I have only to walk a few yards in the morning and I will be in the breakfast room. And my room as such? Small, a bit winding, one window. Well, the room was downstairs, and the middle of the window was at the same level as the pavement in front. It would be perfect to watch feet - François Truffaut, *The Last Metro*? But it was not the pavement of the street, Sussex Gardens. It was the pavement in front of the hotel. Between the hotels, this row of houses, and the street, was an area to drive with your car to the hotels, to unload your car or so, or even to park it. Thus, I would not see the feet of the regular people walking along Sussex Gardens.

A bed, large enough for one person, a cupboard, a desk, and a chair - absolutely enough for me. I needed the room to sleep in at night. I would be outside anyway for the rest of the day. A standard shower and a clean restroom - it all was okay for me. I started to unpack - but, near 7 p.m.? And I would have problems storing my large suitcase - simply on the floor near the desk? I decided to take a shower, change clothes, and have dinner. Where? Well, I would say, what would be more perfect than fish & chips at London Street?

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After the short walk to London Street, which seemed still somewhat disturbing, I stood in front of the Sussex Fish Bar. The place where I had seen the offer of fish & chips. I hesitated for a moment. Other places to eat in the street as well - the Sussex Fish Bar did not necessarily look like a place one would call "sophisticated". An elementary interior was to be seen, a basic menu – fish & chips? The English kitchen, as such, was not really known for a very high standard. On the other hand? It would not kill me, and if not good, I could go to another place – I entered the Sussex Fish Bar.

Obviously, the people here were what one would call ordinary – but hey, this was not the world-famous City of London, and I was not unhappy about that fact. Okay, the order was easy - fish & chips, and something to drink. And what to say? Well, the fish tasted well - simple fish, of course, most likely cod - but in no way fishy, very fresh. Chips, okay, and I ignored the vinegar and suchlike that stood on the table. This meal was absolutely no bummer. It was absolutely okay, as well as the price – this was London, no little small town in nowhere. I was satisfied that I had entered it, and satisfied as I left it again. Back to the hotel?

Well, it had become a balmy night - why not walk around a bit? I started to walk along London Street, but not towards the train station, but in the other direction, and crossed Sussex Gardens. And not long thereafter, I reached a small traffic circle and saw a pub – The Victoria. It looked not bad at all from outside, and I could see through the windows that it was well frequented, but that I could find a seat there as well. After fish & chips, an English pub? But I felt tired - an English beer? Well, this nice-looking pub was very near my hotel. I could come every day. So I decided to walk back to the hotel, but not by simply using the way I came. First, I entered the parallel street to Sussex Gardens, Gloucester Square, as a sign said, and walked to the next corner. There I turned left and entered a street called Radnor Place. To the next corner again, again to my left, was my hotel.

## **February the Second**

For the first time that I woke up in Los Angeles - I looked at the alarm clock. It was my alarm clock, the alarm clock that I had brought along from Germany. It was maybe strange to take your alarm clock with you when traveling from Germany to Los Angeles. But I wasn't sure if there will be one in my room. Okay, normally in every hotel room there was a kind of clock radio or so - in a motel? Learning how to set the alarm? How would the alarm tone sound? In any case, it was better to have your alarm clock with you, the one you were used to. But.....could this cause a problem at the airport, security check?

They had asked me if I planned a terrorist act, ESTA. This nation was still under a shock, schizophrenic, way over a decade after 9/11. 9/11, it was in the afternoon, and I dressed for driving to work. I worked in a French restaurant at that time. I switched on the TV while preparing, and then I saw it - surreal, like one of these silly US disaster movies. But it was real, as I saw the first tower collapse. Then I had to leave. Could I have an alarm clock with me and batteries? In no case in the luggage, carry-on luggage in any case - batteries and clock separated. At the customs, in Germany, at the x-ray, when you have to put out your laptop and electronic devices, I also laid the alarm clock and the batteries in the plastic tray so that everybody could see them, and it functioned! I looked at the clock.

The alarm would start in six minutes, six minutes until 9 a.m., local time - of course, local time! German time would make no sense. It also functioned abroad. When I was working, I rarely heard the alarm. I woke up always somewhat earlier. And, very often, when I intended to stand up at a certain time, then I also woke up somewhat earlier. And it also functioned in Los Angeles.

9 a.m., I thought that this would be a good time to start the day, and I had not to consider any breakfast time. This was a motel, no breakfast at all, and no problem for me. I always had no breakfast in Germany, at home. My plans here, in Los Angeles, America? I had at least no plans for

breakfast today. I would have no time for a breakfast at all today, at least until reaching my today's aim - better, aims. My first morning in Los Angeles, I had a mission. I had to do something. I had two missions. Firstly, the Endless Blue in Santa Monica, and then the white house in Malibu. But I thought, maybe I should get up first?

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The United States, the first thing I did was switch on the TV, local news. The second thing I did was, to take a shower. California, not much water, but at least two or three times a day a shower, not to talk about their pools in the garden. February, the coldest month in Los Angeles, not that cold for me. The summer heat would have been too much for me. Well, maybe it was no luxury to take more than one shower a day? During the summer, at least? - I started to dress.

I was not much interested in TV, looked around in the room. A simple bed, but okay. Was it queensize or kingsize? Funny USA, but it was okay. I had slept well. Some simple pieces of furniture, a dresser, no American shower. The shower was very German-like. And even in Germany, the shower would be a bit out-of-date. But all was clean, and this was important to me.

As I had dressed, I switched off the TV. I had not caught much, something about the new president. Yeah, the new American president. I had planned this travel, still with Obama in office. Then Hillary Clinton tried it. The father and the son, the husband and the wife - what was needed to become the US president? The right name? The proper family bunch? The fitting connections? Enough money? What about skills? Strange USA, and I also thought at the beginning that in this race Hillary Clinton could not lose. But then I watched the presidential debates. And I got more and more of the impression that she would lose it. Her way, arrogant and cold, was devastating, and she was so out of touch with everything. She fell for all his tricks, and in the end, it couldn't be any longer that much of a surprise, that she lost the race. And now this fucking Russia chatter - hey Hillary, you have screwed it up!

But as he got president, I thought: Okay, was a nice thought, traveling to Los Angeles, the United States of America, but not with this president. Not such a USA. But, then I thought: Would this not be idiotic? Maybe now all the more? And it would be Los Angeles, California. Yeah, now all the more! I got out of the room and stepped onto the parking lot.

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The Metro Station would be my first aim for today, which I already had seen yesterday, opposite MacArthur Park. So, it was the same way as yesterday, a somewhat cloudy day today, only that I later did not change the site of the street. And I saw the same as yesterday. The homeless man at the corner, the places to eat, the shops, and the waste in the backstreet. But along Alvarado Street, this time on the other side, the park opposite, I also saw some new shops. But I was not really interested in - it would be my first use of the Los Angeles Metro.

As I reached the plaza and looked at MacArthur Park on the other side, there were still many homeless people there. And I had passed the theater, the former theater, and I still wasn't sure what a swap meet should be. A kind of shop for cheap stuff? Second-hand? I could find out later. The plaza, empty now, with the entrance to the Metro, here underground. I had read some about the Los Angeles Metro, still in Germany. And of course, I had studied the plan with the different Metro Lines.

The metro in Los Angeles - strange, Los Angeles had once a fantastic public transportation and a very functional metro. But these were the black-and-white days. Later, 1950s, they dismantled everything, and the public transport got worse and worse - hey, in the USA, we use our fucking big cars for everything! But then they remembered that a useful metro system wasn't that bad, and they began again to build up, 1990s!, a new metro system. The consequences? All that was connected to the metro was new. Like trains, lines, or stations. Not in London, for example. However, compared with a city like London, the Los Angeles Metro was not very impressive. Some lines, not bad, but

also not very impressive. And, most of the metro lines were overground, not underground. But not here, as the escalator brought me down.

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I entered a larger area, all tiled - the floor as well as the walls. The walls, also with nice pictures in white and blue, looked like stucco, gypsum. Street life in Los Angeles? Nice blue swans. And also on the front side, very colorful, tiles - African American life in Los Angeles? An allegory? But where had I to go?

This was easy, a further escalator would bring you down to the rails. And, because I had a TAP card, I had not to buy me a ticket. I simply had to tap my card before entering the train, every time. Thus, even if only changing trains. Now I also used this elevator and reached the platform.

There were two tracks, but right on the escalator, one could see the guide markers: "To Union Station" and "To North Hollywood". "To Union Station" would be my side, even if Union Station wouldn't be my aim, at least not today. Two lines of the metro used this station: the Red Line and the Purple Line. Both had Union Station as their final aim. Thus, I could use both, but I would use the train only for one station now. My first aim, the Metro Center on 7th Street, would be the next stop. There I would have to change trains. The Red Line was first, and I entered the metro train.

The trains looked not bad - be careful, tourists, when using the L.A. Metro, especially at night! Okay, it was in the morning, and I thought that everything was okay and clean. Like an ordinary metro in any other big city. I sat down. Well, only one station, underground, not much to see - we arrived at the Metro Center. I left the train, and now I would have to see where my next line would depart - the Expo Line.

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Okay, this station was much larger now and had obviously different levels. I needed a moment to orientate, and found a plan on a wall.

Different exits to different streets existed, but I would not leave the station, so this was not relevant to me. Level 1 was to walk between Platform 1 and Platform 2. Level 2, Platform 1, no boarding there - okay? Level 2, Platform 2, Blue Line and Expo Line. Level 3, Red and Purple Line.

Okay, this meant that I was on level 3 and had to go to level 2. I would have simply to use the escalator. But some escalators led to platform 1 - no boarding, and some to platform 2 - boarding. Where exactly was I?

Well, I decided to simply use one of the escalators, to see what would happen. The first thing I realized was, that at the end of the escalator were the machines to tap. Would I have to tap now? Or later? Or was it only important, to tap at the station whenever, only before entering the next train? I tapped. Then I tried to orientate again.

Platform 2, the right side, the track in front of me. I looked at the other side of the track. Why could you not enter the metro from this side, platform 1? You could enter or leave the station on the other side, but not enter the metro? I couldn't see why. Whatever, I had reached my next stage finish - now I had to wait until the Expo Line would arrive. And it needed not a long time.

The metro arrived, passengers stepped out, and others, like me, entered the metro. The metro would depart in the same direction as it arrived because the Metro Center was the final stop of the Blue Line and Expo Line. As said, the L.A. Metro was a relatively new project, and much more was planned. It was not long ago, and I would not have been able to ride to Santa Monica on the Expo Line. The name "Expo Line" said much. The line was much more today, longer, than "Expo". But the ride had just started.

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The ride was underground for the first time, and therefore there was not much to see. We saw

sunlight just early enough, Flower Street, to see right hand the Staples Center and the Convention Center, as well as a large graffiti on the left side, which I could not see well.

I was very deep in basketball for a time. The big years of the Chicago Bulls - not only a few years ago. Michel Jordan, of course, but also Scottie Pippen and Dennis Rodman. I had bought me one biography in my life, and it had been that of Dennis Rodman. Winning in Utah, the Jazz, I saw the last game live on TV in Germany, in the middle of the night. My first game had been the last of Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. They bestowed on him a Harley. The 90s had been my decade of basketball. Later, everything got too clean, and I lost interest.

We underpassed one of the freeways next. Various ramps and exits obviously, all looked chaotic, American-style, not well organized like in Germany. And, it was dark and ugly thereunder - not a good place to be at night, I would say. As well as the shabby nightclub there. But we moved on, and just at the end of the next block, there was a field - with many wooden posts in it? Wow, these were wooden power poles - for what reason? And, when did I see a wooden power pole in Germany for the last time? Somewhere in my youth, I would say!

We reached our first stop soon after: LATTC / Ortho Institute. Neither knew what LATTC meant, nor what the Ortho Institute was. But maybe I would find out, as we moved on again, the next freeway, this time we crossed it, together with some lanes for cars. Everywhere were interesting buildings, and just now there was a not so small church. This church reminded me of the ancient basilica in Trier, but most likely not way over a thousand years old, like the one in Trier. But we kept moving on, now alongside the freeway that we had just crossed, to our next stop: Jefferson / USC.

Okay, USC was easy, University of Southern California. Whereas, I saw no university, but maybe I should not expect something "European". But another sports arena, the Galen Center. However, I could not find a link to what kind of sport, but "Galen Center" was nothing new to me. College basketball, perhaps, most likely? The metro left the station again.

Still alongside the freeway for a moment, underground again, but only a short bend, sunlight again, and the next stop: Expo Park / USC. Left-hand the park, right-hand a driveway to the university, still the university. So it was obvious now that the university had a considerable campus with many buildings, sports arenas, and whatever. And on the other side? Well, the park, but also the Natural History Museum and the Science Center. I planned to visit both. Exposition Park, Expo Line, even if one could ride until Santa Monica with it nowadays.

The next station came very soon: Expo / Vermont. The next two: Expo / Western and Expo / Crenshaw. Well, maybe "Expo" was somewhat more than Exposition Park? Crenshaw was interesting. This street would be an aim of mine as well, Crenshaw Boulevard. But not today.

We had reached the widespread housing areas now, those that shaped the view of Los Angeles so much - low houses, an ocean of low buildings. On the other hand, it was a bit boring now to look at them, as they passed: Farmdale. As we left the station, there was a baseball field to the left. Some played on it, old and young. It seemed like families, neighbors, friends maybe?

In my town of birth, I lived in a smaller town nearby, one could attend a good deal of American sports. Football, ice hockey (two teams), basketball, and baseball. Many American soldiers were based in Germany after WWII, the Cold War, also in my town of birth. They had Pershing missiles, most likely nuclear warheads, and my town of birth was a hot-spot for the peace movement. The American soldiers left later, but their sports stayed.

A short ride, the next station: Expo / La Brea on a bridge - okay, there was something wrong. I had looked at the street signs. We still followed Exposition Boulevard. It seemed as that I had confused some matters. It seemed as it would be no mistake to ask Wikipedia later what it had to say about "Exposition" in Los Angeles.

Other stations followed, mostly housing areas - yeah, Los Angeles was an enormous, expanded, city. It was really not to underestimate, the dimensions of the nation, the same regarding such a city. Stations.....Culver City.....Westwood, and again, Expo! This time Expo / Sepulveda - my idea of "Expo" was dead! But, the most we had managed, I lusted to see the ocean, the big ocean, The Endless Blue. Nevertheless, I still had to be patient for a while, no longer that interested in the

outside. I would using this line not for the last time. Three stations more - still following Exposition Boulevard! - and the next would be my aim: Downtown Santa Monica. And I also reached this station, a larger station with several tracks - why? I had to orientate. As fast as possible, I wanted to see the pier, and the water. The last time? In Stuttgart, a video installation that showed the pier during dusk and night.

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"Pacific Nocturne" by Jan-Peter E. R. Sonntag, a video installation at the Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart, in 2015. "Noise (Murmur)" was the overall topic of the various art works of this artist shown in this exhibition. It was the time I started to ponder about flying to Los Angeles, to the States. I visited the exhibition - in a separate area, darkened, "Pacific Nocturne". I entered the place, and I immediately recognized what I saw - Santa Monica Pier. You could sit down, in semidarkness, and watch a video of Santa Monica Pier and Beach, one shot, as it darkened at dusk. The illumination of the Ferris Wheel set in, as well as the other lights. Soft music, a very chilling moment. And I thought: How beautiful would it be, to see it in reality.

In fact, there were not so many tracks, three, and it was a terminal station. And, it was not so difficult to see where I had to go - following the others. I walked down the large stairs, and a sign said Colorado Avenue - wow, no longer Exposition Boulevard? And I knew, I had to follow this street, it would lead me to the pier. Therefore, I followed it.

A large building, and then you could follow stairs, on your right, which would lead you obviously to a kind of passage with shops and so. Would this passage lead you to the pedestrian area? Later, maybe, not yet, I had to walk straight on yet.

A short way further on, a crossroad, passing McDonald's, one could already see it. An arch, the arch. Nothing else was interesting anymore. Another crossroad, could already see the ocean, the Ferris wheel, and the rollercoaster - parts of it. Then I stood in front of the arch: Santa Monica / Yacht Harbor / Sport Fishing \* Boating / Cafes - and the pier?

You could drive with your car on the road under the arch - to the pier? You could walk alongside - to the pier? I was puzzled for a moment. But why could I not see the pier? Well, I had seen pictures, but the level of the pier was so much lower than the arch, the city. I had totally underestimated this. The way to the pier was steep, but the view was spectacular. Halfway down, I had to stop. A large parking lot to my right, and an interesting building to the left, where obviously the pier began. The top of the Ferris wheel behind. The pier as such? But behind all, the blue surface of the ocean until the horizon - I had tears in my eyes. I walked the rest down, where the pier as such began.

The nice building, letters on it: Merry Go-Round - inside? The reason for, that the roof looking like a circus tent? Later! A restaurant next - no hunger, I had an aim! I had therefore no longer time to be interested in all that was on my way now, walking along the pier, to its end. Several restaurants, a café, shops - all uninteresting. Then I understood that it was not a Ferris wheel and a rollercoaster - it was an amusement park there. And, in a way, the pier as a pier began only now. Now it was a more or less narrow pier. Something that I would have considered a pier. I headed on, between the two buildings at the near end - again, a restaurant. Then all was behind me, and I realized that there were two levels. One could walk stairs down, a smaller, narrower, level. Now I had reached the absolute end of Santa Monica Pier. In front of me, until the horizon and thousands of miles further on, nothing but water, the water of the Endless Ocean, the Endless Blue. I cried, like now, but I was nearly alone while looking at the ocean, at my first day in Los Angeles.

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As a child, I nearly drowned in a small river, after nearly had died directly after birth - ICU. One might would assume now that I would hate water, but quite the contrary!

Okay, I had forgotten everything for a long time, and still today I could not remember much. Some before it happened, and an image thereafter - that was all. I was unable to remember the drowning

as such. And I was fascinated by water. I loved it being surrounded by water and, especially, being underwater.

Unfortunately, I lived in southern Germany, with no coast. I always had two dreams. To live at the ocean one day - not a sea, an ocean, the large ocean, the Pacific Ocean. And, to be buried in water. But, Germany, very strict rules regarding funerals. So, burial at sea was only possible if the dead person had a special relationship to the sea. As a captain, for instance. But I discovered one day that this strict rule no longer existed! From this day on, it was obvious that my graveyard would have to be the sea, would have to be an ocean, would have to be the large ocean. So, as I stood at the very end of Santa Monica Pier, looking at the Pacific Ocean, I looked at my graveyard. I cried and felt relieved. I nearly drowned as a child. But one day it would happen finally, perhaps after death.

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I needed some time to get my feelings under control again, but it was okay. It was a very emotional moment for me, to see this endless blue water surface that covered half of the earth. But this was only the first of my two aims today. The next would need a bus ride. And, this would not be my last time here, at the pier, the beach, Santa Monica. It was the West Coast. Therefore, it was possible in the evening to see the sun drowning in the ocean. I thought: What about living on a small island? In the evening, you could see the sun drowning in the ocean. The next morning, the sun would be reborn and would arise anew from the ocean. It would be pretty nice, I thought. I decided to leave for today and walk back. Now I would have a bit more time to view the pier as such.

I walked back, between the two houses again, at the end of the pier. The larger building, the restaurant, to my left. The smaller, the harbor office, to my right. Then the narrow, front part, of the pier. Not so much there. One could buy tourists' stuff. And a man made music, and not so much away another man as well. The first musician was more fast and rock-oriented, the second country or so. I passed them, but it seemed as though this part of the pier was also for street music or so. Then I reached the larger part of the pier, the rectangular part.

Now I started to understand. On the back part was the amusement park with the Ferris wheel, the rollercoaster, and more. Of course, one had to pay for it all. In front, where the people walked, there were different places to eat and drink something. "Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf"? I have had no breakfast, would have a ride with the bus now, and had no idea if and when lunch would be. I decided to enter Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf to have breakfast.

First, they offered only beverage, but nothing to eat. Then, a lot of cold stuff, with a lot of cream, ice, or so, and a lot of sugar and calories. But, outside was a trailer where you could buy pretzels, and they also offered good coffee and tea. So, I decided to order a coffee and sit down for a while.

Well, I had my coffee, and it tasted fine, but sitting down? I always felt this inner unrest - always on the move, always the next, always so many opportunities, from one to the next. I often had the feeling that I would always live in the future, but never in the present. And because the future always consisted of many possibilities, I was always stuck between them, all those possibilities. I could have an Americano, but also a mocha. I loved drinking tea. Why not a tea? Should I buy me a bottle of water for later? The world was typically an ocean of endless possibilities, and I tried not to drown in them.

After this part of the pier, with the amusement park and these places to eat and drink, there were restrooms and a parking lot. Who was allowed to drive down on the pier? Not everyone - that would make no sense. Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. to my left - it looked a bit fast-food to me - and a restaurant and bar, and another seafood restaurant to my left followed. The next building was the nice one with the merry-go-round inside, the end - or the beginning - of the pier.

This time I wanted to see the merry-go-round. I finished my pretzel and crossed the way over the pier to look through one of the windows - it looked outstandingly beautiful. I decided to walk around the corner and look again through the windows. I saw wonderful horses and a carriage, all nicely painted. It seemed to be old - very old for American circumstances. Should I enter? Not today. I had other plans, but later? Would it be allowed to be used by an adult? Should I ask? Would

I dare to ask? Most likely not.

What I also discovered was that there was also an aquarium. Aquariums, and even more zoos, were always special places for me. I would have to visit it later one day. And, on the street, alongside the beach? Some bars and restaurants. One bar with a blackboard, they offered Pabst Blue Ribbon. Yeah, I was on the way to you - Pabst Blue Ribbon on ice.

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Well, it should be easy to find the bus stop. I had simply to walk back, up the way down to the pier, to the first crossroad, where the arch was. The bus stop should be to my right. So much, I knew. And in fact, it was not complicated.

At the crossroad again, after a last look down at the pier - I would see the ocean during the whole ride - I saw that to my left were several bus stops. I simply needed to find mine. What I also saw was, kitty-corner, the crossroads, where obviously a park was, right at the corner, a small plaza with benches, two obviously homeless people sleeping on these benches. Well, there were also homeless people in Santa Monica, not only Skid Row. And then I saw some more homeless people, at the small park at the bus stops. One was young, most likely not a homeless person as such. One would have named him a hippy, most likely, in the 60s and 70s - and today? I found the place where my bus would stop - Line 534 to Malibu.

Malibu, it would be the road along the beach - the road "under" me. The road that tunneled under the crossroad where I was now - how would I reach it? As always, American street alignment was relatively confusing, at least for a German. But, I was sure, relatively, to be at the right bus stop. The rest, I would see.

Ocean Avenue, a sign told me, was the street I was now on. The street to Malibu should be the Pacific Coast Highway - should I be prepared better, at least occasionally? But, was it important what street it would be, as long as the street would pass the white house? I smiled. I once had confused the Sunset Boulevard, the Sunset Strip, with the Pacific Coast Highway. I had mentioned palm trees and the ocean at Sunset Strip, until I had noticed that this was pure nonsense. However, with the Pacific Ocean Highway? I had seen no palm trees at all, at the street at the beach? I had not looked precise. Many palm trees here, this street. Ocean Avenue looked very similar to the one I had at that time in mind - also "Wild Palms", at the end. Did I confuse the Pacific Coast Highway with the Ocean Avenue as well? So, at last, I did confuse the Sunset Strip not with the Pacific Coast Highway, but with Ocean Avenue? It was good that my bus arrived. I entered it, tapped, and sat down.

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The bus started to move and crossed the crossroads. Then, at the entrance to the park on the other side, the bus turned sharply right, one hundred and eighty degrees, downhill - now I understood. This was the feeder road to the Pacific Ocean Highway. We drove around the seafood restaurant at Ocean Avenue in a way, and now underpassed the street and pathway to the pier. It needed a moment, then we reached the Pacific Ocean Highway, and I started to look out of the window.

I sat in the back of the bus alone, with three other passengers in the front part. Not many people ride buses in the USA? Was it really only for those who could not afford an own car? In Germany? School kids and students - but school buses in the USA. Commuters, especially in the cities. But, one had to say, that public transport wasn't that good anymore in Germany. So, yes, there were often empty buses in Germany as well. And, since this was the beginning of the trip, it might be that the bus would see more passengers later. The white house.

Of course, I did not know the nearest bus stop to the white house, I had a different plan. I would wait until I passed it, and at the next stop, I would leave and walk back. I did not expect that there would be a bus stop right in front of it. And, I had no distinct knowledge of how long it would take to reach it, only that it wouldn't be around the corner. But I had enough time, the whole day.

We underpassed what seemed to be a pedestrian bridge - yeah, the drop from Ocean Avenue to the Pacific Coast Highway, from the city to the beach, was larger than I had expected. But especially, not to see that much erosion. Then a row of houses to my left, directly at the beach. Most likely not the cheapest place to live, I thought, but we would drive to Malibu. The white house, three million dollars, but this was not a spectacular price for a house in Malibu - it wasn't at Billionaire Beach.

Then a huge parking lot, no palm trees, more houses, more parking, still no palm trees, and also no bus stop. I started to become a bit nervous. Everything looked much different, than I had thought. It started to become a bit boring.

Okay, riding alongside the ocean was cool. It was wonderful to see the water. But the rest. We passed a beach club, still houses to the right - still Los Angeles? More parking possibilities, to my right, more and more brown soil, and various beaches to the left. I started to understand that there was not only one beach, but obviously many of them, some small. We continued our way - should we reach the white house soon, and still not one bus stop?

Then the bus stopped for the first time. At a place where a larger road, at least large for me, hit the Pacific Ocean Highway at a right angle. Houses here to my right, still Los Angeles? Or already, Malibu? I had no idea about how large Malibu was. The bus moved again.

But only for a short distance, then the bus stopped again, still with the houses to my right. Long no stop, now so quick again? We continued our ride, but again, not for long, the next stop. Should this be our pace now? Okay, that would mean that I would not have to walk long to reach the white house - when I would reach it. And why did we stop here so quickly again? Because of the "complex", whatever it was, on the other side, at the beach? With such a large parking lot, no one there would use the bus. Staff - if they had staff - could be, as the bus continued its way.

Not much changed, the brown soil to my right, a lot of parking space to my left - sometimes houses. Was all this Malibu? Well, the beach, better beaches, to my left, and especially the ocean. This time we needed longer, as the bus stopped again. A larger street hit again the Pacific Coast Highway, a kind of settlement - Malibu? And, a green sign over the street - Sunset Boulevard! Now I was very puzzled. If this was Sunset Boulevard, the street that hit Pacific Ocean Highway, was this still Los Angeles? Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood, and now? Okay, this was America.

What I knew was, that one of the highways cutting through Los Angeles had a length twice the distance from my town of birth, Heilbronn, to Stuttgart. And to drive from Heilbronn to Stuttgart was considered as a longer distance in Germany. I knew that a street like Pico Boulevard could have the length of this distance, all the time straight on! Yeah, this was America. This was Los Angeles. One had to become aware of this! We continued our way.

The next stop was soon again, at a very interesting-looking building. I pondered for a second if I should step out, but I had another aim today. Again, not very long, again another street hit the Pacific Ocean Boulevard, again some houses - had I missed the white house? I had looked carefully. On the left side, at the beach, it had to be, like in the video. I started to become nervous again - leaving the bus? But even if I had missed it, I would have to ride back anyway. It's better to stay on the bus, I thought, as the bus moved on.

The next stop was very interesting. A street hit again on the Pacific Coast Highway - always bus stops at this T-junctions? There were no houses around, or at least no residential houses. But at the left and right of the T-junction, there was much to see. On one side, there was a gas station, a 7-Eleven, and strange-looking terraces on the hill behind. On the other side, where the bus stood, was a shop - Malibu Feed Bin: Okay, now it was official. This was Malibu. But the Billionaire's Beach, also Malibu, we had passed it a long time ago. It seemed as though Malibu would stretch over a very long distance along the coast. And the hills and the valleys? I had seen crazy-looking houses up some hills, most likely the really expensive houses in Malibu. Or the ones where you saw nothing more than a gate and eventually a driveway. What would "living in Malibu" mean, except the knowledge that you would be a millionaire? The bus moved again, unfortunately, there was also a shop for everything or so. It looked somewhat crazy, like in a movie: You better not go there! Or you have to, to find the love of your life and stay forever with her in this isolated desert. Okay, looking only at this shop, this could be everywhere in the wasteland - and obviously in Malibu. On

the other side a narrow beach. Sometimes there was no beach at all, very rocky sometimes, here a small beach again. But as said, unfortunately, the bus had continued its ride - but I had to drive back later.

I often saw restaurants - had eaten nothing apart from the bezel so far - as well as hotels. Could this also be an interesting place to stay for a vacation? Most likely expensive? But now, for a time, nothing, left and right, then again, houses to the left - Malibu Beach Houses. This looked like the area where the white house should be. A row of houses, then beach again, then the white house, isolated, like in the video.

The video? Well, her videos? Most of them I did not like that much. They were not so fascinating. On the other hand, some were simply astonishing. It seemed as though they were either something special or not very interesting - nothing in between. And, of course, her short movie. Three songs, three poems. Paradise with a not-naked Eva, but a very arousing bite into the apple. Los Angeles, the entrance to the underworld, with a Latino gang. And finally, the rapture - heaven. The bus stopped. Should I leave the bus here? If this was the place, I assumed....but if not? I stayed on the bus.

We continued, and the row of beach houses ended - this had to be the place! And there it was: The white house, looked a bit more gray, and we passed it. Where would be the next stop? Again, beach houses, a small street hit the highway, a zebra crossing, and we stopped. Okay. It would not be the shortest way, but it was manageable - and I hesitated. Still only a few in the bus, one behind me, four in the front part - I still hesitated. Should I do it? Wouldn't it be childish? I had made some crazy stuff over the last few years. And as the bus moved on again, I still sat in my seat.

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I did not leave the bus - always plans and ideas, but did not implement them? But in the last few years, I had started to do things. I even had finished something and brought it to an end. I had started an interesting project, my webpage. I had done some crazy stuff, with no outcome. But I had done it. And now? I had not left the bus, to walk back, to the white house.

Well, I had read that she was sometimes annoyed by "fans", shouting her name near her house. She even had once called the police. I did not see me as a "fan". So, why doing "fan-stuff"? It was only the idea of being near the place she lived, not trying to get her attention. Hey, I did not assume that it would be very "cool" to meet her - I wouldn't be cool. I would be stressed, would sweat most likely, would be insecure as always, most likely a disaster. No, I did not hope to see her, or even more.

The bus had continued its way, with many beach houses to the left, and brown soil at the hills to my right. And, of course, the wonderful sight of the ocean. We reached the next stop, and I was not sure why the bus stopped here. Only a few beach houses, but also some parking space - a nice beach, maybe? And we moved again.

Not much changed, nothing changed, until our next stop. Not only one, but three roads hit the Pacific Ocean Highway here. Canyons - where the really important people lived? Blues from Laurel Canyon - was this in this area? Where all these big legends had lived? All these white legends?

As we drove again, to the next stop, to my right - yeah, this was, in fact, more houses, a larger part of.....of what? Was this a part of Malibu - still Malibu? It still seemed not cheap to live there. In fact, I had no real idea where I was or how many miles we had driven so far. Should I step out? I had time. This was my first whole day in Los Angeles. I had time.

After a bend, it was not good to see from the bus, but obviously, again, very sophisticated houses on top of the hills. And somewhat further on, something started. It appeared that I would be in a real city again. Not so much at the first stop, but then two more, shortly one after the other. Shops, restaurants, houses - still Malibu? A somewhat longer distance, a fourth stop in this area, and a sign on the other side of the road: Malibu / Sport Fishing Pier / Charter Boats. So, okay, still Malibu, and another pier - should I leave the bus now? Where the bus had stopped were at least two restaurants - how expanded was this Malibu? When would we reach the final stop? I would have to drive back. I

would be here later again. Why not still wait and see what happens next? The bus drove again. And it started to become very interesting. We crossed a river, a small river, with a kind of delta. And, we left the Pacific Ocean Highway, turned right, and entered the settlement there, entered this part of Malibu.

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A short way, and the bus stopped. On my side of the street was a somewhat larger building with several small shops. In any case, clothes, with a name over the entrance. It looked very European - small retail shops. But the most interesting was on the other side. Over this entrance was not a name but: CHOCOLATIER. Wow, a shop for chocolate only? Was this still the USA? A possible answer? No, this is Malibu, where the millionaires live.

Again, there was an impulse to leave the bus, but the bus on return would stop right in front of the chocolate shop. Thus, I did not leave the bus. Around the corner, at the next stop, it seemed as though this would be already the end of the settlement. And in fact, again a very short ride, the bus stopped once more - nothing was there anymore? Okay, on the other side, a plate said: Legacy Park. Okay, I would call it brown soil with some bushes, but I could not see much. Then we moved on, nearly hit the Pacific Ocean Highway again, but we only drove along it. And very fast we entered the next settlement - or was it still the same?

This one seemed much larger than the last one, which had been small. Right at the beginning larger housing blocks, not everything was good to see because of trees, but in any case much larger. A bent, then we followed a straight street uphill - no beach any longer! Should this be the end of my trip? No ocean anymore? I felt a little panic as the bus stopped again. Leaving? But why, I would drive the same way back. And, I started to get curious about what would come next. I stayed on the bus.

We continued to follow the street uphill until we reached a large crossroad. Where were we now? We turned left, this should be towards the ocean again, and stopped once more shortly after. And again, I had absolutely no idea why we stopped here. Green grass - green grass? - on the right side and bushes on the other - why we stopped here? Well, whatever, the bus headed on. For a short way still uphill, but then in a long bent downhill again. And the ocean was there again, and just before we hit the Pacific Ocean Highway again, we stopped again. Why? Well, not much was to see. On the other side of the highway was something, but it was not good to see. But more important to me was, we turned right and had finally reached the Pacific Coast Highway again.

But the "landscape" had changed. So far, the ocean had always been very near, but not now. A lot of grassland to my left now, no ocean, no beach, had I waited too long? I had assumed that the bus would always follow the coast, but obviously not. But we followed the highway again, and stopped once more after a not so long time. Still no beach, still no ocean. But.....

The bus was still nearly empty. Sporadically, someone entered the bus, or somebody left the bus. I was again alone in the back of the bus, with two passengers in the front part. The bus reached the bus stop, and somebody waited to enter it. So far, so normal. But who had waited and entered the bus now? A young woman, maybe twenty-two, wearing very tight yoga pants and a short top - I would call it a sports bra. She had a backpack and a skateboard with her - a long board. And I thought: Well, the USA is not very well known for its loose way of dealing with sexuality. On the contrary, that it is a very uptight nation. On the other hand, this was California, Los Angeles, or, better yet, Malibu. So, obviously, this was the Californian way.

Well, I started to look out of the window - I had a kind of quirk. I liked to observe, to look at something, and also at people. This was not offensively meant, but of course, a person could feel so. Especially if, as a man, I looked at a woman. Thus, I tried not to look at her too much.

She came towards the back part of the bus - I could see it out of the corner of my eye - where only I sat. I not wanted to look at her when she would pass me, so I concentrated on the outside. And, I was somewhat surprised as I felt that someone sat down next to me - she had chosen the seat next to me? I moved my head a bit - yes, she sat next to me. I mean, I was an older man, sat alone in the

back part of the bus, and she sat down next to me? The bus had left the bus stop, and I tried to get along with the new situation.

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Well, in a nearly empty bus - I did not like it to be too near other people. Okay, in a crowded bus or subway, one had to accept it, and even then, I did not feel comfort. But on a near-empty bus? I would have liked it more if she had chosen another seat. And the question arose, as Mrs. Grant sang: Is it by mistake or design? Good question, Mrs. Grant. I tried to ignore her, but I lost the thread. We drove for a longer time now. The ocean was there as well, more or less - how many stops? My eyes turned slightly to the right. She had begun to read a book with an illustration, a drawing. I could not read the text. I had no glasses on, but the illustration was no matter of interpretation. Two naked women, with jewelry, no doubts, Indian women - Scissor Sisters.

The Kama Sutra? Did she read the Kama Sutra on a bus, sitting next to an elder man? Talked the Kama Sutra also about lesbian love? I had never read it. I was even more puzzled - was this, in fact, the USA? Then we left the ocean again. One, two more stops, and as I turned again slightly to the right, she had closed the book but was still on her knees. The title was printed large enough so that I could read it: Tantric Sex Practices for Women. Wow, I thought: Welcome to California! Then she started to prepare to leave, and I was curious about where she would leave the bus.

After a somewhat longer time, we had left the ocean again, had entered a housing area again - and I had absolutely no idea where we were, as usual. Still Malibu? Due to be in a settlement again, the bus stopped more often now, and now she left the bus. I looked around.

On the other side of the road, there was a gas station, and signs. Huge: Pavilions. Somewhat smaller: Point Dume Village. I had no idea, but I followed her. I followed her across the street, and we entered the village. On a two-lane road uphill, I could not see what would be behind the hill. To my left was a large building, to my right was the gas station and some other buildings. Obviously restaurants and shops.

She started to walk along the road. We passed the gas station, and she entered a parking lot to our right. A restaurant and a more narrow way between this and another building. She stopped and grabbed something out of her backpack - a white T-shirt that she pulled over. Then she entered a small shop there, between the two houses. At least it seemed to be a small shop. I read: SunLife Organics, and I could see what they offered - smoothies. I had heard about them - healthy and green smoothies for the health-conscious Californians. Twenty bucks and more!

I would not follow her - two reasons. First and foremost. I thought that I should not overstate it. Okay, it had been funny so far. I had no idea why she had chosen the seat next to me and had read this book. But whatever, this did not mean that therefrom anything yielded. I feared that following her further on would be offensive. But secondly, it had become afternoon. Only a pretzel on the pier so far, a restaurant at the corner of the building. And, I was not interested in paying a lot for an overpriced smoothies that most likely would not taste. I entered the restaurant, Ciel Orange. [was not the name]

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It looked sophisticated and expensive, not like Gus's. But, in fact, I had become hungry. Thus, I took a seat. I was a bit nervous, sitting in a kind of winter garden, on a high chair. Two tables apart, four men sat, and it seemed to be a business lunch. I was also nervous because I was insecure about the table manners, especially regarding lunch, in such a restaurant. Okay, as such, I knew them, but this was my first time. So, I was not surprised that I got asked if I would wish to have water, but I reacted "European". I said no, and ordered a glass of white wine, a Cabernet Sauvignon, which seemed to be a mistake. Well, a glass of wine for lunch? Not uncommon in Germany, in France it was a normality, especially in such a restaurant. But here?

I had studied the menu. Fine dishes, expensive, but they seemed worth the price. A lot of seafood -

tuna tartar wouldn't be bad? But at last, I decided on a salad with king prawns. A standard dish. And I loved salad as well as seafood. And what to say, it was very fine, costly, but okay for this place. The other table paid. They got a small leather folder, and one of them put his credit card into it. The waiter came and took it, bringing it back moderately later. Okay, not uncommon in more expensive restaurants in Germany as well, only that you would possibly pay with cash. I decided to pay as well. I had to ride back, and there was still the white house.

I also got a small leather folder, and I put my credit card in. What about the tip? Again, I started to get nervous, but I had to give a tip. These were the USA. Apart from that, tipping was common in Germany. But in the USA, it was often important for the staff to get a tip, which was poorly paid, as I had read. The waiter came to fetch the folder as I told him that he should charge the credit card with more than the bill, a round amount. Now the waiter was surprised, looked at me, and said: I did not expect to get a tip from you. I was even more insecure now, and started to sweat even more: Ah, sure. The waiter left, and came back after a short while, still with the folder. I had to fill out a slip, add the tip to the invoiced amount, and sign the slip. Okay, understandable. This was that they could prove that it was correct that they had charged my credit card with the higher amount. My problem was that I had paid a round sum, so I had to do a bit of math. It would have been easier to say he should add five, ten, or how many dollars, instead of paying a round sum. And I asked myself, sweating: Why did everything always turn into such a mess? It could have been so easy. Then I left the restaurant to walk to the bus stop, to drive back.

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So, I stood at the bus stop - I had pondered for a moment about following the street uphill to see what's behind there. The place where the young woman most likely would live. I could not imagine that these few houses I had seen so far would be the whole Point Dume Village. On the other hand? But such a large building, post office? But I was tired. It would be a longer way back to Santa Monica, and even longer to be back in the motel again. I decided thus that I would take the bus back.

The bus stop, somewhat somber there. A few trees, but not much more. I missed trees somewhat, foliage trees, and woods. Yes, the palm trees were nice, but they gave you no real shade, as did the low houses and the broad streets. It was a more or less cloudy day, but always when the sun appeared, it became hot, at least to me, standing at this bus stop with absolutely no shade. No bus came. On the other side of the road a farm, a plantation, or something similar. I looked at the hills in the background, some green, some brown, some bushes obviously, but no trees - one or two, maybe. Was this a nice landscape? I came to no conclusion - the bus came, and I found some shade.

Well, of course, it was the same way back then. It nearly felt somewhat familiar now, to ride along the Pacific Coast Highway, along the ocean. We entered the settlement again, and the bus stopped in front of the chocolate shop. But it had gotten late, and I did not leave the bus. The pier again - would it be worth returning for a visit? Then we reached the bus stop - next would be the white house. And this time, I left the bus.

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I started to walk along the road, and it was very obvious that normally no one does that at this place. There was no real sidewalk, the cars passed by, the sun was still somewhat high and hot, no shade. It would not be a very long way, but it felt like doing something idiotic. Like the time I worked at the medieval castle. I walked from there down to the small village, and through the small village, with a considerable bouquet of flowers - everybody could see me. I felt a bit the same today.

The houses, some behind fences, looked not necessarily impressive, knowing what they were worth of. But it was not the house as such. It was Malibu, at the beach - directly aside from the highway! I had passed the first row of houses - a little gap, a little beach, rocky, not looking like a million-dollar beach. The second row of houses, after the bend, the white house would be. It was not very

nice to walk alongside the highway - cars and trucks passed by. At least a bit of shade now. Then the bend, the row ended, a somewhat larger gap, the white house. In fact, it looked more gray, no longer exactly like in the video. I stood in front of the door – 19562.

Of course, I did not ring. A Mercedes parked in front of the house, two garages? Her two "Jags" most likely, and the Mercedes? I passed the house, and sat down on the rocks. Rocks? In the video, there was a beach aside from both sides of the house. But now, to the left and right of the house, there was no beach anymore. Many rocks filled up the bank - why? I wasn't sure and looked at the house.

Would she be in? Would I see her? Most likely not. And this would be okay - would not know how to behave. I looked at the ocean and at the waves, like they hit the rocks. Seagulls, and I spoke with them - would she be in? I loved her music and always named her Mrs. Grant. Her stage name was not her name as an artist, at least for me - her music.

Several female artists, all with high voices, but she was something special. And yet, the most beautiful voice she did not have, neither the highest, and so on. But it was her music. The best image I had found was: A labyrinth without an exit. Every song, when I listened to a song I could have repeated the song endlessly. An album, every album, I could have listened to endlessly. It was always difficult for me to stop listening to a song, to start with a new album, or to talk about stopping listening to her music at all. To listen to one of the other female artists. Her music was like a drug, an undertow, and I liked to drown in it. And now I sat here.

*I can see my sweet boy swaying  
On the balcony and I'm saying*

Yeah, I was well over fifty, most likely not her common audience, but hey! All the criticism she got in Germany - knew much about her life. The boarding school, her time with the teacher. I would have liked it to have such a teacher as well. The chatter about the wealth of her family - wasn't it her, standing on the stage, or the possible money of her parents? Yeah, the violins, the fucking violins. I always thought: Give her voice more space! Poolside, poolside at the Château Marmont. As I found those two songs on the internet, I knew that she was something special. A wonderful dress, some notes of a piano, and some notes of a guitar - not more. And her astounding voice suddenly had all the space that it needed to enfold all its beauty. And her early videos. Jump, the man with the trumpet. Diet Mountain Dew - her smile. And, of course: The Ocean.

*One, two, make it fun  
Don't trust anyone*

Well, I wiped away my tears. I should return to Santa Monica. It had been nice to be here, so much more would be to say. But maybe not. The mother who held me in her arms and embraced me. But this was Beth Gibbons.

*All that's real to me is Marilyn and Jesus  
Jumping off of bridges  
Sparklers and streamers, honey  
I wanna fly, I wanna fly, I wanna fly*

\*

I had kept in mind that it would be a much longer way to reach the next bus station towards Santa Monica. I thus walked the way back to the bus station where I had left the bus and waited for the next. It had become late afternoon, and I wanted to see the sunset, sunset at Santa Monica Beach - Pacific Nocturne. And nicely, I had not to wait too long and sat in the bus again, heading towards Santa Monica.

And in fact, it took a somewhat longer time to reach the next bus stop. It was the one with the strange-looking shop - should I leave the bus? I did, not really knowing why, but even if I missed the sunset today, I would have enough other chances. Now that I had sat near the white house.

Standing on the street, looking at the other side, the "shop" looked much less interesting. Furniture and everything for the house, except that it was an open-air market. But I had the feeling that I could buy there only what you could also buy at many places - higher priced or less priced? It looked a bit "hippie", with an American flag. We promise you much, but in the end..... - I looked at the ocean and at the beach.

The beach was much larger than it had seemed at first glance, towards the white house. Well, the next bus would not come immediately, so I decided to walk around a bit, to discover that beach. I could walk along a street, where one could drive down to the beach - would it be allowed? At the highway, we had passed them with the bus, were parking lots. There was a small building down the beach - restrooms. There were not many here. I was nearly alone, but it was February. It seemed as that this little beach would be more frequented in the summer - but why? Okay, it was not bad. Even a small river entered the ocean here. Formed even a kind of little lake. And even if I did not find an answer in the end, all this parking space, this seemed to be a special place. But I did not want to miss the next bus, so I went back to the bus stop again. And luckily, I did not wait too long. It seemed still possible to reach Santa Monica fast enough to see the sunset.

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Yeah, it was still a longer way back, and I had to realize how tired I was. I looked at the ocean. The sun was again nearer the horizon. As we reached the Ocean Avenue again, the sun was already very near the horizon, but was still there. I did not want to be on the pier again. I wanted to be at the beach. We had underpassed this pedestrian overpath two times. This pedestrian overpath should lead me directly to the beach, so I hoped. And, I should reach it easily when walking along Ocean Avenue.

So, I walked through the park area there, along Ocean Avenue, and I could always see the ocean and the sun. And in fact, I needed not long, and I reached the pedestrian overpath, and it led me directly to the beach. There were two lanes there, one for pedestrians and one for bikers or roller bladders, and not cheap-looking houses. But at least some seemed to be empty, and two of them definitely got renovated. Summer houses at the beach? I decided to sit down on one of the concrete blocks that separated the two lanes. This was most likely not why they were there, but this was California. Be a bit relaxed, Peter, I thought. It became darker now, and the sun touched the water and started to drown.

It was interesting and beautiful, and it happened fast. I asked myself: How fast? Well, it should be easy to calculate. The diameter of the sun was half a degree. Three hundred sixty degrees in twenty-four hours. One hundred eighty degrees in twelve hours. Ninety degrees in six hours, or three hundred and sixty minutes. Wow, this was cool. Ninety degrees were one hundred eighty times half a degree. The answer was, three hundred sixty divided by one hundred and eighty - and this was simple: Two! Two minutes. Okay, it obviously would differ regarding your geographical location. But it should be a good number for Los Angeles, most likely a bit longer. But now I felt it - I was exhausted and hungry.

I decided to walk back to the metro station - it had been a very long day! And as I reached the station, a metro back to the city was already waiting - there were therefore more than two tracks. I could enter it, sit down, and I feared falling asleep.

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Riding back was hard. The lights outside, I had a headache. Wow, the whole way back, it would need some time. I had to wait. And as we reached the park with the museums, I was happy. We had managed most of the way. But as we were underground again, I had to concentrate, not to miss the

Metro Center. The Metro Center. Leaving the metro, with the escalator to the lower floor, not forgetting to tap again. Red or Purple Line, Red Line was faster. One halt, Westlake. Then the way back to the motel, my legs hurt. This had been too much for the first day. All these impressions, all these emotions. And as I was in my room again - I had to eat something! Gus's? A place nearer? I knew the way to Gus's, I knew the menu, and it was nice there. Well, up the street, down the street - I did it. I had pondered about taking a shower first, new clothes, but I was too tired. I hoped that it would be okay to eat at Gus's in the clothes I had worn the whole day.

\*

I stood at the counter, another young Latina behind it today. The soup of the day was sold out - I was too late. I decided for a steak with beans and rice and a side salad as well. I had to drink - water, coffee, and orange juice. On the patio again, the cold air did me good. Had it been stupid what I had done today? Well, in a way, I was proud of myself. I had done it. I had seen my graveyard and the white house as well. I had not planned to be on the bus that long, but it had been very interesting. Well, at the restaurant, or.....should I plan my days better? I smiled a bit. Overall, it had been a fucking cool day. I had made so many things. My meal came.

And again, it was excellent. The steak was perfectly fried, and the beans and rice were good for a hungry man. I decided, after the perfect meal, to sit for a moment longer, even if I was so tired. One or two coffees more. I planned to be in Long Beach tomorrow, but only in Long Beach. It would be a longer ride with the metro, another line. But now I enjoyed it sitting here on this patio, among the other - Latino - customers.

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For the first time that I woke up in London - I looked at the alarm clock. It was my alarm clock, the alarm clock that I had brought along from Germany. It was maybe strange to take your alarm clock with you when traveling from Germany to London. But I wasn't sure if there will be one in my room. Okay, normally in every hotel room there was a kind of clock radio or so - in a cheap one in London? Learning how to set the alarm? How would the alarm tone sound? In any case, it was better to have your alarm clock with you, the one you were used to. But.....could this cause a problem at the airport, security check?

Could I have an alarm clock with me and batteries? In no case in the luggage, carry-on luggage in any case - batteries and clock separated. At the customs, in Germany, at the x-ray, when you have to put out your laptop and electronic devices, I also laid the alarm clock and the batteries in the plastic tray so that everybody could see them, and it functioned! I looked at the clock.

The alarm would start in six minutes, six minutes until 6:30 a.m., local time - of course, local time! German time would make no sense. It also functioned abroad. When I was working, I rarely heard the alarm. I woke up always somewhat earlier. And, very often, when I intended to stand up at a certain time, then I also woke up somewhat earlier. And it also functioned in London.

6:30 a.m., I thought that this would be a good time to start the day. Breakfast would be from 7:30 a.m. on - would give me the time to stand up slowly, take a shower, dress up, pack my backpack, and ponder what to do with the day. Whereby, I had not to ponder about what to do today. 7:25 a.m., I stood in front of the breakfast room, and it was weird in a way. An English breakfast? I always ate no breakfast at all in Germany, if working, or at home on my days off. But here, in London, on vacation, the famous English breakfast? Okay, I had to have breakfast. Also, an idea was maybe to skip lunch therefor, or to have a late lunch, whatever would fit best.

The breakfast room was not a large room, but it had a TV on the wall - British breakfast TV, obviously. No one was in, I was too early, could I enter? Well, I entered the room carefully as a woman appeared on the other side of the room in a door frame - obviously the kitchen. I should choose a seat. She pointed at the breakfast buffet, and disappeared again. I decided on the last table in the middle row, with my back to the wall, the doors and the buffet in front of me. The breakfast

room was a bit small, or there were too many tables in it. Whatever, not that much space, but enough. I walked to the buffet and decided to start with tea, orange juice and cereals. Shortly after I sat at my table again, a younger woman came from outside, and disappeared in the kitchen - her shift had begun? Then she came to me with several slices of toast.

"Do you wish for eggs or anything else?"

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

"Three fried eggs, please."

"Only fried eggs?"

"Yes."

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

The room had filled as I finished my breakfast. At nearly all the tables people were sitting now. I heard people speaking French and.....South African language? The young woman was busy now, and at one table she had people who did not speak English very well. But she could obviously identify their dialect.

"You're from Spain?"

"Si!"

Now she began to talk Spanish with them, and I could see that they were very surprised about how well she could speak Spanish. I left the breakfast room to pack the rest of my things and to leave the hotel.

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My first morning in London, I had something to do. I had to see the world-famous Black Swans at St. James's Park. And I knew the way thereto - more or less, roughly, it was easy. From the hotel to Hyde Park, through Hyde Park, and from Hyde Park following the street to Buckingham Palace, St. James's Park would be on the other side. What about a map?

Well, I hated maps. I liked knowing where I had to go - roughly, the direction. It was because I liked exploring places and cities. Sure, sometimes it took somewhat longer. Okay, eventually you missed something, but very often you saw something you would otherwise never have seen or discovered. The risk was missing the tourist's stuff - the you-have-to-see sights. But, it gave you the opportunity to discover all that all those tourists missed. A place, a city, as such, the real place, the real city, not the myth, the fake, the facade, just the bogus for the tourists.

I knew that Hyde Park would be just around the corner, and that I would have more than one possibility of easily reaching the park. I had just to walk in the direction London Street pointed to. There would be the park - and it was a huge park. But I decided to follow Sussex Gardens. Thus, I crossed London Street and followed Sussex Gardens until it ended in a nice little green area. I would have to turn left - there should be the park. I walked alongside a large hotel - there was the park. Easy as that!

It was a small way, some stairs, that finally led me into the park, but it led me to the park anyway - I looked left and right. On the left, I would hit a larger street - not very interesting. On the right, there was a nice-looking building. I turned right. More park architecture, and a café, The Italian Gardens Café. Well, right after having had an English Breakfast? Bad timing. But there was much more to see now. Right in the direction I would be interested in following was a nice garden with fountains - very nice. And just there, on one end of the area, on the other, a nice little building to sit down and

enjoy the sight, the lake began. The lake through Hyde Park - perfect. I knew not everything, but if I followed the lake, then it would end right at that corner of Hyde Park that I wanted to reach. Thus, I followed the lake.

And it was a nice walk along the lake, with green grass, nice trees and a nice view of the lake. At one site, a group of Scandinavian - they sounded Scandinavian, maybe Swedish - girls fed squirrels - gray ones. Did they also here displace the brown ones? Whatever, it looked nice. The girls as they fed the squirrels with peanuts - and the sun shone.

The English weather. It was still morning, but I had to doff my light jacket that I wore. I had decided to have an umbrella in my backpack, and to wear a light jacket that I could put into the backpack as well. Thus, I should be prepared in a good way for the infamous English weather. But the sun shone currently, and I walked under a bridge.

Now the lake appeared differently. Not only a narrow way, but a real promenade, all obviously more "touristic" now. An isle in the lake, a boat rental, and at the end, a restaurant. And, I had still not reached the corner of Hyde Park. I had to walk straight ahead further on, but not for long. Then I had reached my corner of Hyde Park. Now I had to change from one corner to the other.

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Well, it was not exactly the corner so far - it was the end of the way I had taken. I could turn left now, or right. Left was a gate, and I would be on a larger street, but it would be the wrong direction. Therefore, I turned right and headed towards a structure of three arches - I chose the middle one, the largest one, but it would have not made any difference to use one of the smaller ones, left or right. Now I was at the corner of the park - a larger traffic circle with a green area inside in front of me - and the next, large, arch. I crossed the street and entered the inner of the traffic circle - statues and memorials.

A statue and a memorial first, then the arch - London, a place of many such statues and memorials and arches and the like. I did know this, and that many dealt with WWII, but also with the - bright? - history of the Commonwealth. Well, the history of the Commonwealth was not necessarily a very pleasant story, at least for those who were "allowed" to join the Commonwealth. The German history? The terror bombing of London by the Germans, the V2? Well, the British answer was also very brutal - my city of birth got completely destroyed in one night. And who had started the fucking war and had "invented" the total annihilation of cities by bombers - Guernica? War was always a fucking shit, as colonization. I crossed the traffic circle again to enter the next street, downhill.

I knew that I had to follow that street. To my left was a park, to my right was a wall. And I knew that down the street, there would be the statue of Victoria, and Buckingham Palace as well. And there would also be the park I looked for - St. James's Park. Behind the wall? Obviously, also a park, the park of Buckingham Palace most likely - I reached the plaza.

Well, of course, not unfamiliar, too often seen on TV. The statue of Victoria in the middle, the fences, and gates in front of the palace, the place as such. There should be a flag if the queen was in - I could not find one. And I had other queens in mind - black queens! Thus, I walked around the plaza to reach the opposite side, there should be my aim - I had to orientate. But then I found the small way, downhill again, toward a lake, the lake where the black swans should be - an isle in front of me. And yes, there they were, at least three of them. A pair and a single one, three wonderful black swans.

Black swans - I wasn't sure about when I got aware of them. But since I always wanted to see them. The heraldic animal of Western Australia, the famous stamps, the inverted swan. The black swans, the "killers" of the so-called tautology about the always white swans. And yes, a few I had seen in fact, but not many. The first during my military service. I had to ride by train to Tauberbischofsheim, and not long before the station, at the railroad embankment, there were allotment gardens. And in one, there was a peacock as well as a black swan - a somewhat strange view! The second on the river in my hometown - I had still no idea why there was a black swan on

the river Kocher. But I could see the swan only from afar. Okay, the last black swans I saw were from near, as I worked in Friedberg near Augsburg some years ago. In the zoo in Augsburg, one could see black swans, and I loved seeing them. But, the most famous black swans? Well, those in St. James's Park, of course.

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I was always fascinated by black swans - in my youth, I knew the European, white, swans very well. Two rivers surrounded my hometown, Kocher and Neckar, and seeing a swan was nothing uncommon. The huge white mute swans. Well, as a child, they were tall as you, with a massive body and enormous wings. Seeing them flying, how much effort was needed to start on the water. But then, with their long necks, elegantly flying, like the one seeing during the summer nights. How different were the black swans. Much smaller and more gracile, like a dancer, a ballerina. Elegant and delicate, all black, dark black, with their red beaks. In fact, black swans also had white feathers, wing feathers, only to be seen when flying. And not all in the same amount or order, not knowing if this separated different suborders of black swans. Whatever, it was always a delight for me to see a black swan, like now, at St. James's Park.

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I started to walk around the lake, but it seemed as though the black swans were only near the isle - maybe more black swans on the other side of the isle, the other side of the lake? As I reached the other end of the lake, there was a second, even larger, isle. And a few more of the beautiful black ballerinas, black queens - okay, some should be male swans, but that was perhaps not so relevant at the moment. I continued my way around the lake, to get to the other side, as I noticed that it was possible to get on this larger isle.

Duck Island, and the Duck Island Cottage - typically English, a typical English institution? And okay, ducks, but what about the wonderful black swans? Well, I would pass St. James's Park and this site more often over the upcoming weeks. Thus, I continued my way, also not really interested in what would be outside the park.

As I was on the other side of the small isle, nearly back again, no further black swans were to be seen. And even as I was at my starting point again, the three black swans I had seen there, at the beginning of my round around the lake, had been disappearing. I decided to walk back to the hotel, searching for a place to eat something.

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It had become evening, back in the hotel. I had eaten something while walking back to the hotel, and had started to learn something about London - street signs. The street along St. James's Park was the famous "The Mall" - straight from Buckingham Palace to the impressive building on the other end. The street for the parades, if I weren't wrong - already seen on TV? The street, now up to the traffic circle, was Constitution Hill. The Green Park on one side and the park of Buckingham Palace on the other side - behind the wall, a not very high and safety wall? The arch in the middle of the traffic circle was Wellington Arch, and the statue was Wellington on a horse. Not bad for the first day, I thought. Then I reached the three arches again. I had seen on my way to St. James Park, that right there was a place to buy something to eat and drink - The Lodge Café. I bought a sandwich, a quiche, a coffee, and a bottle of water. It was cloudy and colder now, and I had my jacket on again.

I had decided, being ultimately in Hyde Park again, not to walk the same way back, which would be a long way, but to cross the park. That should bring me faster back than walking along the lake again. So I started, and after a while under trees, I reached open fields. Well, green meadows, and an excellent overview of this part of the park - I reached an obvious central point of the park. The

mosaic of a tree on the ground, and several marks of where all the ways would lead you started from this point. Nine or eleven, depended on how you would count. Okay, one led to the public restrooms, but it was not bad to know something like that. And which of the ways should I take now? Well, I calculated the principle direction that should bring me back to the point where I had entered the park in the morning, and decided on one of the ways. What to say? It was nice to walk along it, even if I not only had my jacket on again, but I also had to use my umbrella now. It had started to rain slightly. But, after the anyway charming walk, I reached the street that I had seen on my left as I had entered the park in the morning. Wow, I had nearly hit my starting point again. The rest of the way to the hotel was, of course, easy now. And now at the hotel again, after a shower and new clothes, I left the hotel once more for dinner.

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I decided to walk along Sussex Gardens, but not in the direction of the pub, the other direction. But only to the next corner, Radnor Place. I had already used this street and had seen an interesting curved street. Thus, I followed Radnor Place until the next corner - the curved street was Somers Crescent. So I followed this street now, and I had started to read the street signs. They made this excellent in London, I had to confess - W2, City of Westminster. But the street was short and led to the next curved street, Hyde Park Crescent. There were many trees and a church, and I reached the next corner, Connaught Street. Better to say, a corner with three streets. Kendal Street was also there. And a pub, the Duke of Kendal, and a restaurant. But what interested me the most was a place right at the corner of Hyde Park Crescent and Connaught Street - Le Pain Quotidien. A bakery, but tables and chairs as well? I decided to enter this place.

Okay, as I entered it, it was definitely a bakery. One could buy delicious-looking bread, different kinds of rolls, and pastry - suchlike. But they also served meals, several tables were there. One could also eat here - I sat down. There were only two more tables with guests, and a waiter brought me the menu. Well, it all seemed to be very attractive and healthy, not very cheap - okay, it was London. Various salads, all organic, and even vegan. It did not make the impression of a place for ordinary workers, but a board on the wall provided some information.

It was a chain originally from Belgium. "Le Pain Quotidien" would mean "your daily bread" in French. I decided on the Smoked Chicken Cobb and a jasmine tea. Well, the tea was very fine, and the salad was simply fantastic. A lemon tart to finish the meal - as tasty as the rest. A second jasmine tea as I realized that they started to close - I asked the waiter. Yes, but in half an hour, I would not have to hurry. So, I lent back, the black swans, now a nice dinner. A pub to end the day? Should be, I thought, the one just around the corner, the Duke of Kendal? But a nice little walk to The Victoria wouldn't maybe also be no bad idea? Well, I still had twenty minutes to decide.

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The Victoria was my decision, and it should not be that difficult to reach the pub from the place where I was now. I started to have an idea of the streets in this area - Connaught Street. I started to follow Connaught Street, the direction that would bring me back. But only one block later, the street ended, with a green area in front. The traversing street was Hyde Park Street. One direction, turning right, would lead me back to Hyde Park Crescent - I would have surrounded this housing block then. The other direction, to my left, would obviously lead me to Hyde Park. One could see the park already, even if it was night now. But I crossed Hyde Park Street to walk along the green area with nice trees. This was called Hyde Park Square - a lot of Hyde Park here? After the green area, the street became Strathearn Place, and I reached the small traffic circle again, where this street met with Gloucester Road and Sussex Place, where The Victoria was. I looked through the windows. Many guests were in, obviously, it was the time for the pub now. But I could see that at the counter there would be free seats. I thus entered the pub - and the pub was bigger on the inside than it was on the outside.

It looked charming in a way, with a lot of wood, and it seemed not to be a simple pub - a pub in the countryside. To my right, through a smaller passage, one could reach another room, or rooms? This area seemed separated, but still part of the pub. There was a very narrow staircase, a circular staircase, narrow and steep, in front of me. Upstairs, a sign told you there would be a bar - should I? It would not be my first time in a bar, but a bar in England at such a place? I did not dare. Downstairs would be the restroom - good to know. And the part where I stood now?

Some tables in my area, some tables in the background - it seemed as this had been formerly two rooms - a narrow passage. But the long counter connected both parts, and I took a place there. Well, I was not the only one at the counter, but there was at least one free seat between me and the next person. And a man was behind the counter. He seemed in a good mood, as he asked me what I wanted to drink - a little problem for me.

Okay, obviously, a wine or so would have been possible - enough bottles behind him. But this was a pub, therefore beer. Although I was no beer drinker, and the notoriously warm English beer? The only beer I sometimes drank was dark beer - they offered Guinness. Yet, Guinness? That I could get in every Irish pub in Germany - and not only there. Irish pubs - every German city seemed to have at least one Irish pub. Okay, the "golden age" of Irish pubs seemed to be over, but there were still enough of them one could find in Germany. Irish folk and Riverdance had never been mine. The Corrs, three sisters - or. The sweetie at the drums and the hot one singing - Andrea Corr. Was it so? Something like that. One song I liked, but I had forgotten the title, was about sleeping. But apart from that, all this Irish stuff always seemed very kitschy to me. And then the two English sisters asked, why always this Irish folk, what would be with English folk music? Well, I was in England for them, to listen to them in Bristol later in the month. But this would be later, and so I asked him for a recommendation - a dark beer, but no Guinness. His answer came fast and distinct - ESB! So I ordered one - a pint, of course - and got a good-looking beer. In a pub, you had to pay right away. I knew this. And, others had done it as I waited, all by using the bank card. Well, at a pub? I had to pay four fifty - no bargain for a beer. I gave him five pounds.

The Victoria, the good old Victoria, the nice sweet little queen in her youth, the famous portrait as she was an older woman. The ruler of the Commonwealth, what did she know about all those who starved to death in India, for example. Or the cruelties in Africa? And the queen today, the monarchy as such? Well, as a German, I was not interested in having a king or queen. We had "lost" our Kaiser, the one with the big mouth who started WWI with it, after the lost world war. Okay, we got then our Fuehrer from Austria, who started WWII and killed millions of Jews. Could it be that we Germans were not the best at selecting our political leaders? I ordered a second ESB and had to visit the restroom.

The staircase down was very narrow and steep, and I had already had a pint - not that used to drinking alcohol. Halfway down, one could see a kitchen. The kitchen, not that small it seemed. I had seen three people eating a snack at one of the tables in the background. Could it be that this other part of the pub was for dining? They seemed to have more than one order - and I had to concentrate not to miss a step. I should empty my second ESB slowly, and then have a nice walk back to the hotel. I knew various options now.

### **February the Third**

The second day, ten minutes before the alarm, I opened my eyes. I looked around the room. It was the second day that I woke up here, and it nearly felt like this was the normality.

I stood up, switched on the TV, took a shower, and dressed. A pair of trousers, a shirt. Then I packed my backpack, something about too little rain on TV, the light jacket as well. Before I left the room, I put a dollar note on the pillow. I had read that this would be normal in the States. Then I left the room.

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On the sidewalk, I pondered what to do now. How do I arrange my mornings? Well, I did not have breakfast in Germany, but on vacation? I had planned to be on my feet during the day, no real lunch, a snack maybe, but a good dinner. Something for breakfast wouldn't be that silly, I thought. And then I had another problem.

I had a subscription to the L.A. Times, the e-paper. And now I was in Los Angeles. Sure, I wanted to buy me my daily L.A. Times now. But this was not as easy as I had thought. Yesterday, I had always looked left and right, but I had not found a place to buy a newspaper. I had passed some newspaper boxes, even in the morning, but no newspapers in them, especially no L.A. Times. It was silly, I had not seen one place one could call a "shop for newspapers" or anything suchlike. It would have been easy in Germany to buy me a newspaper or a magazine. But in Los Angeles? There, it seems to be a real quest.

Then I remembered the shop at Union Station, for travel necessities. If not in such a shop at a train station, then nowhere, I thought. Starting the morning by using the Metro to ride to Union Station, at first? There was also this nice place to sit down and eat something, in this wonderful hall at Union Station. They would also serve breakfast, most likely? At least, it would be worth a try.

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I walked to the Metro Station, a route, I would say, nearly familiar now. The same shops, the small one with fruits, the "restaurants" not looking as nice as Gus's, the homeless man at the corner, in the backstreet, still the same pile of waste as before, now starting to smell somewhat. And what was to be said? This was a place they would not recommend to you as a tourist. Not clean enough, not rich enough, not white enough.

Still in Germany, I had used Wikipedia, Los Angeles, the history of Los Angeles. Two maps had been interesting. One was a map of the "racial and ethnic distribution" in Los Angeles. They really named this map such - for me, it sounded racist. Like the talking about brown and black people, or people of color - like someone would have colored them. The second map showed the income of the citizens. It was very telling how well they matched!

I used the Purple Line and reached Union Station very soon and entered a short time later the shop for travel necessities. Well, you could buy much, and in fact, also the L.A. Times. I grabbed one, paid, and entered the wonderful hall again. I had to traverse the hall nearly completely. The restaurant for everyone, not only for Amtrak customers, was in the back part of the hall. At least seen from this perspective, near the entrance, the way to the plaza and the taxis. It was named Café Crêpe and looked nice. A few people sat there on nice tables and chairs, and I chose one. I was a bit nervous, as always, insecure, as a young African American woman came and asked if I wished the menu. I affirmed, and the menu looked excellent. I was not much interested in all the meals for lunch or dinner - do they also serve dinner? I was here for breakfast, and they offered much for breakfast. It seemed like the perfect place to have breakfast.

I hesitated, and I had to tell the waitress that I still needed some more time. In the end, I decided on Eggs Benedict. Eggs Benedict? As a cook, I knew what this meant, of course, but I had never prepared them or eaten them. I had never worked as a breakfast cook, and I could not remember that I had ever seen them on a menu. I had once worked at a large hotel by the Baltic Sea, and the breakfast cook there was not pleased if he had to prepare many of them. I hoped that my order was okay with the cook here. Coffee, of course, even though I liked to drink tea. Tea at home, coffee if on the way. But what kind of coffee? They offered different coffees in different sizes. I decided for a triple Americano, not sure why, not very sure what it was. Large, most likely. The waitress came again, and I placed my order.

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I had to wait for a moment, of course, until the eggs had been prepared. The coffee was fast, and in fact, it was a large cup. The taste? An ordinary coffee, I would say, not much power, but okay for the morning - well, it was no mocha or so. I looked at the wonderful ceiling of the hall, and the impressive floor - a remnant of the classic days, when Hollywood still meant real glamour? I had read about the station on Wikipedia, but I had forgotten the date when they had built the station. In any case, it was an older building in Los Angeles, whatever this meant in the USA. Two or three hundred years were not considered that old in Germany or Europe. I got my eggs.

They looked superb, and I tried a piece. The eggs were perfectly poached, and the hollandaise? I could not say it definitively, but it seemed like the hollandaise had been home-made. Wow, again, had I underestimated the American kitchen? Had I been too arrogant? I would have been absolutely satisfied if I had prepared these eggs. As I had finished the tasty meal, I enjoyed the coffee while reading my L.A. Times. Well, what a perfect beginning to that day. This could become my morning routine!

I emptied the coffee and stopped reading the Times. I would read the rest over the day, in the Metro, for instance. I paid, and gave a good tip. Still the States, and this time it functioned without difficulties. But now I had to leave. Long Beach waited.

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Well, at first, it was the same as when I had used the Expo Line. Westlake Station to Metro Center, changing of metro and level, the same platform as the Expo Line. I only started to feel comfortable with it - it was easy in the end. The worst could be forgetting to tap or entering the wrong metro. I had to wait somewhat longer this time. The Expo Line was first, then my line came, the Blue Line. And also, the first part of the ride was the same. L.A. Lakers, the chaotic highway with the club, until we reached the "field" again - where the wooden power poles stood.

The Expo Line would continue its way straight ahead, but we turned left. Whereby, the way to Long Beach would be much longer than riding to Santa Monica. So, I would have time to see the city. But, was I in a different mood today? It seemed not very interesting what I saw. Housing blocks, shops, and restaurants - should I read my newspaper? Then we turned right and stopped again - Washington. From now on, until Long Beach, we would ride strictly southward, more or less straight ahead - these were the US.

But not so much changed - more companies, recycling. One side of the road sometimes looked very different from the other side of the road. We reached Vernon and stopped. All turned increasingly into an industrial area. We reached Slauson and stopped. We started again to ride through housing areas, some nice buildings, and architecture, but with no deep emotion. It had been quite different yesterday, on my first day - Florence.

Sports fields, okay - baseball, of course. It sometimes seemed like some houses would look somewhat "Mexican" - Firestone. I started to get a bit bored. I looked at my clock - half-way, maybe. 103rd Street / Watts Tower Station, charming palm trees, a kind of bend. Then we underpassed highways and stopped once more. Willowbrook - Rosa Parks Station. Yeah, I knew her name - was this an African American neighborhood? We would also stop at Compton. And in fact, our next stop was Compton.

I looked around. A modern-looking station with good houses on the other side. It seemed not to be the worst neighborhood in Los Angeles. Well, it was 2018 and not 1992 - Straight Outta Compton; N.W.A. I had read that today half of the population would be Latinos, and that also more and more white people would live here because it was still affordable. But I planned to be here over the coming days anyway. I was thus not unhappy that the metro train moved again. It was still a longer way.

Artesia, not bad-looking houses left and right - Del Arno. We crossed the Los Angeles River shortly after. Los Angeles River! Well, I was still in America. A lot of concrete, and a bit of water in it - only too well known from the movies. Maybe after a rain fall? But so it looked hilarious, to name

this a river!

Wardlow, Willow Street Station, a bend. Larger houses now, shops, and restaurants - it looked again more urban. Would we already be in Long Beach? It seemed so - Pacific Cost Highway? Okay, this was definitely the Blue Line, and this was not Santa Monica. The Pacific Coast Highway - how long would this highway be? From Malibu over Santa Monica until Long Beach? Was I near the beach now? The station I had planned to leave the metro was Downtown Long Beach. Did I miss the station? No, never.

Anaheim Street - well, the street that would lead you to Anaheim and the Anaheim Stadium - the tracks split. 5th Street and 1st Street - this was certainly Long Beach now! A bend again, I could see no beach, Downtown Long Beach. I had reached my aim, my final destination.

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There I was, Downtown Long Beach. Okay, I was interested in seeing the ocean again - another beach. Santa Monica Beach had been a must - the next beach that was good to reach was Long Beach. The beaches in between had no good, or no at all, connection to the metro system. Maybe buses, but why not Long Beach next, after Santa Monica Beach?

I looked around the next corner - a park on one side, an interesting high building on the other. The street was the Pacific Avenue. A lot of Pacific here, I only could not see any Pacific? I entered the street, Pacific Avenue, and I knew that this would be the direction to reach the ocean. And that the ocean should not be so far away. Whereby.....

On a map, especially a map of the metro lines or so, everything did not look giant. It seemed to be a city - okay, a large city. But you did not look at a city. You looked at a whole huge metropolitan region, the by far largest in the whole USA. Thus, maybe especially as a European, it was easy to underestimate distances. Like yesterday, the extent of Malibu. And I was sure now, that I had seen only a fraction of Malibu, not more. Thus, I was not sure if it was, in fact, a not so long way to the ocean, as I reached the next corner - West Ocean Boulevard! Should I follow this street?

Okay, I had no other plans today than to be at this beach, so why not? I turned right and followed West Ocean Boulevard. Housing blocks, apartments, office blocks, companies. In any case, not the cheapest place to live, obviously, but it fascinated me not much. I had not the feeling that I would like to live here. I continued my way.

Okay, some interesting buildings to my left and right - interesting architecture. But in a way, the aseptic architecture of the post-post-post-how-many-posts-you-every-would-need-postmodern era. And, I saw a Latino. Well, in a way, that reminded me of yesterday. While waiting at the bus stop at Point Dume, a car entered the village. An old pickup with a Latino at the steering wheel to care for the gardens of those living there. How many Latinos lived in Point Dume Village? And now? I had seen this on TV, about the USA, and had thought that this would be a joke. A man with an advertising sign in hand, whirling it around and showing tricks with it. I had the feeling that it would not be far away that he would be a "nigger" in shabby clothes and would call me master or so. How many Latinos lived in Long Beach? I moved on, and Ocean Boulevard became a bridge - why?

In any case, I was not interested in crossing anything. So I turned left and entered a street named Golden Shore - wow, if this wouldn't be the right way. And also this street became a bridge, and not much longer and I could see what was there that Ocean Boulevard had to cross - a river? A river in Los Angeles? Los Angeles River? But it seemed to be a real river, not a dry riverbed made of concrete.

I saw a small way alongside the Golden Shore RV Resort - had absolutely no idea what "RV" should mean. It was a parking lot with many motorhomes, but no trailer park. Whatever, I followed the small way and reached the river fast. And yes, it was a river, and not a small one. But all the water? If it were the Los Angeles River, where was the water from? Not long ago, I crossed the river with the metro, and it had been dry - and now. But what other river should this be, if not the Los Angeles River? I was somewhat confused, but I had to confess, that it was nice here. I wanted

to follow the river - a river would lead you to the ocean. However, I could not. The river started to open up - the ocean had to be near. However, I had to walk back. I walked along a kind of lagoon until I reached Golden Shore again.

Around a bend, and a very interesting sight. Three, similar, interesting-looking houses and a harbor basin. Not a large one. Only a few ships, for tourists? I started to walk along the basin. First with the three buildings to my left, then towards, as I understood now, the Los Angeles River. I reached the river, broader now, and had to underpass a street. On the other side?

Wow, everything looked very different now! In the background, on the other side of the river, a huge old passenger ship - the Queen Mary. Why did I know this? And on my side seemed to be a park area with several buildings. I started to explore.

The first thing I was interested in, was the area with the buildings. It was a theme park or something like that - an aquarium, in any case. But I was not really interested in - maybe later. Then there was another harbor basin, this time definitely filled with ships for tourists and cruises. But what interested me the most was the park area, and the beacon that I found at its end - Lions Lighthouse. However, I then realized that, to continue my way towards the ocean, the direction the Los Angeles River showed me, I had to do a lot of walking. In front of me, at the lighthouse, the mouth of the harbor basin - a dead-end road!

The way back through the park to the aquarium wouldn't be a big problem. But, I had to walk around the whole harbor basin. The issue? I had seen now that it was much larger than I thought at first. And, I had no idea what would be behind it. The beach, the long beach? I hoped so!

I started my way, walked, and walked, passed some restaurants - the harbor was always to my right. Eating something, drinking something? But I feared that my way would still be long. I continued and reached a corner, a pedestrian bridge, now walking between a street and the harbor with some green. Water was also on the other side of the street. It all looked interesting, but I wanted to reach the beach.

I crossed a parking lot on the next corner, a street as well, and reached an even larger harbor with many rows of yachts. I asked myself if all this made sense. I had no real idea where Long Beach would be. Should I continue my way? But what alternatives would I have? I had not only started to sweat.

I started to walk along the rows of yachts - advertizing for fishing and whale watching. Whale watching? Well, that I could consider fascinating, but should I dare? And by the way, I had to find the beach - I continued my way. And it became a long way. At least it felt so, until I reached its end - Long Beach. And it was no question that this name fitted. And I realized that following Pacific Avenue would have been a much shorter way! This had been an enormous detour. On the other hand. The beacon, the Los Angeles River as a river, the Queen Mary, the nice park, interesting buildings, knowing about the aquarium, all that and more I would have missed then. My legs hurt.

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So, I had reached the beach, and started to walk along the water. It had been a sunny day so far, but it was not so hot over the morning, and the sun low. There was a very interesting view in front of me now, as we headed toward noon. On the beach, between the ocean and the buildings to my right, there was haze. And not only a bit, the buildings looked milky, and I had no clear vision of the coming beach. It reminded me of my arrival at LAX and my ride on the FlyAway bus to Union Station. Was this a common weather phenomenon on the West Coast, down on the West Coast? In any case, it was obvious that the beach wasn't short, not like in Malibu. It was a long beach, but I could not see the details. And two isles offshore, or three, with palm trees? They looked a bit strange. It seemed as though they would not fit into the scenery - but why not? Perhaps it would be possible to visit them. But I decided to start my walk first.

The waterline made a bend so that the beach got narrower, until it seemed as though the beach had reached its constant width. But still, even if much smaller now, I had to confess, a pretty nice beach. And something happened as I continued my way. The haze suddenly disappeared - everything was

nice to see now. And the sun shone on a bright blue sky - it was nearly noon now. I felt the heat immediately, like at the bus stop yesterday. Well, in Germany, during the summer, I had to be careful with the summer heat. However, it was February, the coldest month in Los Angeles, but more in the south now? I thought it would be maybe better to buy me a hat or a cap or something like that. Would I need sun blocker? Even in summer, I did not need sun blocker in Germany. But I was no guy sitting for hours in the sun during summer. I liked the shade. I saw a pier ahead and decided to walk to it. Then I would see if I could find a shop to buy sun blocker, or maybe even a cap.

I had made some progress now. The pier was definitely nearer, but still at a certain distance. Had I underestimated the distance again? I felt the sun very hard now. Would I get a sunburn? A sunburn in Los Angeles in February? Should I try to leave the beach and reach the street? I saw no good way, and even if so, what then? And I wanted to see the pier. I decided to walk the rest of the way to the pier. I could find there most likely everything I needed.

And yes, I reached the pier. It was the Belmont Veteran's Memorial Pier, and I felt that it had been a bad decision. I knew this feeling - the head, the face, the neck. I would get a sunburn. But nevertheless, I decided to walk along the pier, to be at the ocean again, like at Santa Monica Pier. Some more sun would not change a lot, I thought - I already have a sunburn.

It was nice, the view, but many ships were also there, the huge harbor, as were the weird isles. One with buildings, and the palm trees were around. Maybe I could find out what islands these were. And my head told me that I should leave, that I should find some shade. But my heart wanted to stay, even if the view of the ocean on Santa Monica Pier had been much more impressive. At the end, I walked back.

A restaurant had been on the pier. Now, leaving the pier, there were more restaurants. Yeah, it would be maybe no bad idea to eat something, especially to drink something - why did I have no water in my backpack? But first, I needed some care for my head.

Every house was a restaurant, but only on a short street, and there was a market at its end - the market. It seemed like a shop for everything. I entered it, and found sun blocker. There was sun milk for kids, and spray for adults - spray? I looked at the sun protection factors. Much higher than in Germany. I bought the one with the highest factor, and used it outside, in a corner. It seemed to cool somewhat, but I feared that it would be far too late. Eating something? Well, enough restaurants were in the short street to the pier - I decided to Gypsy's Mediterranean Grill.

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It was a Persian restaurant, and this seemed to be a good choice. I ordered water and a coffee, a salad to start with, and lamb. But first, I had to visit the restroom, before I could enjoy the meal. Cold water for the face, that helped. Meaningful after the sun blocker? Whatever, I saw a red face, and my bald head looked not better. I walked back to my table and felt not pretty good. I had sweated a lot while walking along the beach, and I sweated right now. Now I felt uncomfortable, but I had to rest for a while, I had to eat something, and I especially had to drink a lot.

The meal was wonderful, with baklava as dessert. I asked myself what the waitress thought of me. Sweating, with a red head and face, I would most likely be here never again. Unfortunately, because this was a nice place, and the Persian kitchen always wonderful. Okay, the bill had a high number. But, Long Beach, near the pier, and after such a delightful lunch? I had to walk back to the metro station.

Alongside the market, the street that could bring me back. It was East Ocean Boulevard. Well, I started at West Ocean Boulevard. So far, not bad. The street would bring me right back. But, "East", I started at "West"? Sure, it was a long way along the beach. Now it would be a long way back along Ocean Boulevard. However, I bought me first some water in the market, for the way back. And the houses on the street would provide at least some shade.

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Yeah, houses on the street would give me some shade. For a short distance, yes. But then there were only green areas between the street and the beach - no houses anymore, no shade anymore. I had not really realized this as I walked down the beach. Okay, later there would be houses again, but now I would have no shade once more. The next street over? This street should also lead me back? - Should! Whyever, I decided not to experiment anymore and to follow the direct way. I had used sun blocker, but it definitely felt bad. On the other hand, this time, it was the other side of my head that pointed towards the sun. I tried to reach the houses as fast as I could, without running.

Well, I had managed it - houses again. It would mean shade - and the first was the Long Beach Museum of Art. Normally, it would be absolutely a place to visit, but not under such circumstances. I was very sweaty and thirsty. The water in my backpack did not really help. So, no art, but the shade was relieving, even if not constant.

Shortly after the museum, there was again a green area, but not extended. Later, between the houses, there was often sun, when crossing the streets from one block to the other as well. While in the sun I always sped up, while in the shade I slowed down. And it never changed, it was always East Ocean Boulevard. Before I would not reach West Ocean Boulevard, I would be by no means at my aim. I reached a larger crossroad.

There I could see, while crossing it, that I was now in the area where the beach began - but also on the other side, still East Ocean Boulevard. Would this mean that Pacific Avenue would not have led me to the beach? I was too tired now for such pondering. But, it should be, that I would have made most of the distance now - at least I hoped so.

I had no mind anymore for what surrounded me - not for the plaza I passed now, not for the interesting architecture around. I wanted to reach the park again, where I had started, to walk back to the metro station. And suddenly, there was the park again, and just at this moment East Ocean Boulevard turned into West Ocean Boulevard. And yes, Pacific Avenue would not have led me to the ocean, the beach, by no means! At least not directly. But I crossed the street now, entered the Pacific Avenue the other direction, passed the Wells Fargo building and reached the metro station again, Downtown Long Beach.

The next metro did not come immediately, but this was not bad. I stood in the shade, drank my last water, and sweated a lot. In the windows, when looking at them, I could see how red my head was now - and I felt embarrassed. I tried to come down a bit. And as the metro arrived, I searched for a place in the shade, alone.

I had not much interest in the ride. I closed my eyes. I had to recover somewhat. Compton, the Los Angeles River, I hoped to be back soon. But, of course, it was also a long ride back to 7th Street. But as we turned sharply right, as we reached the wooden posts again, I knew, soon, I would be there. A short distance, and we would be underground again, the Metro Center. Changing trains and levels, do not forget to tap, waiting for the next metro. Red or purple, no matter, one station. Okay, the way back to the motel - uphill. However, then I would be there. I could take a shower. I could have some rest. It would be good to buy me some water on the way back to the motel. There were enough shops that I would pass. They would see this idiot with the red head - the sunburn.

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I had been in the motel, had taken a shower, and had slept for a while. It had already been dark for a longer time, as I had woken up again and had looked at the red face and head in the mirror. I had been hungry and had decided to dress up again - despite my sunburn. I had walked to Gus's - despite my sunburn. There I had ordered a meal, and plenty to drink - despite my sunburn. I had decided that it was too late now to complain and to act more clever. Now I had to live with it and accept it. The young Latina behind the counter, it had been the same woman as yesterday - she knew me without a sunburn. She had not given me the feeling that I had been a stupid person. She had acted as if she would not notice my sunburn. And now I sat on the patio again.

I had eaten a salad, had drunken much water, had a coffee and a natural orange juice now. The soup of the day had been sold out again. I should be here earlier here if I wanted one. It would have been a lentil soup today. But anyway, it was good to sit here again.

It was even somewhat cold now. I had my light jacket on. The colder air at night was refreshing - I nearly fell asleep. Had it been stupid what I had done? I had underestimated distances again - okay. But I had any time I wanted, I had not to reach an aim in a certain time - if at all. I had carelessly underestimated the power of the sun. That had been a serious mistake. I could have been warned, yesterday at the bus stop. I had sunblocker now - too late, but still. Tomorrow, I had to see tomorrow, how severe it was. Whether the skin would flake off or not. In any case, I would have to buy a cap. It should be possible on my way to the metro station tomorrow, enough shops - if I did anything at all.

I planned to ride to Santa Monica again, to visit the pedestrian area. Sunset at Santa Monica Beach again? I had to solve another problem, if it were a problem as such. Koreatown later? But, at Union Station with a sunburn? In the metro with a sunburn, the whole way to Santa Monica? Walking around the pedestrian area with a sunburn - I should stop this. I had to see tomorrow how severe it was.

I tried to enjoy the night a bit, on the patio of Gus's. There were only a few other people sitting on the patio, but they seemed not to be interested in me. It was nice simply walking around and exploring the city that way. But maybe I should be a bit more careful. Okay, tomorrow, only the pedestrian area. The pier and beach again? The way from the metro station - Westlake - to Koreatown wouldn't be long either. If I were even doing it. It should be a much easier day tomorrow compared with the last two. I emptied my beverages and walked back to the motel. Slowly up the hill, and slowly down the hill, enjoying the cooler night.

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My second morning. I stood up, took a shower and was ready for breakfast at 7:30 a.m. - I was again the first in the breakfast room. Tea, cereals, and orange juice, as yesterday. And as yesterday, the two women, the older one in the kitchen and the younger one in the service, were there and again very friendly - she could remember that I had only eggs from the British breakfast offer yesterday. And yes, so today, this would be enough for me. Toast, of course, marmalade and honey, as well as yogurt - would be enough until the afternoon, I thought.

I was more relaxed today than yesterday, as the room started to fill. I started to watch TV - the one on the wall. Well, the English breakfast TV was definitely not better than the German one. There were two main topics. The Brexit, of course, the tottering Theresa May, and the lurking Boris Johnson. It seemed as though the expectation was that Theresa May's days in office would be counted and that it would be only a matter of time, until the PM would be a man again. Wow, Boris, together with the American president, that would be a dream couple of bigmouth asshole males. And we had mommy Angela - where have all the politicians gone, those with a backbone and attitudes?

But maybe it was not relevant to answer this question, because, at the end, this was perhaps an important question, but by far not the most important question. Much more important was the Royal Baby! No, not born so far - but possibly tomorrow, or the day after, or on another day? And, what would be the baby's name? This was the question that had the potential to shake the world.

Okay, never married, no children. But why the fuck should this be more important than Brexit, the future of Theresa May, or whether the power-mad Johnson would become PM or not? Well, I finished my breakfast and walked back to my room. The backpack, I put the jacket on, through the window I could see a little piece of the sky. I would walk a longer distance today. "The River" would be my aim.

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A somewhat different route to Hyde Park today, yet familiar already. I walked the few feet along Sussex Gardens until I reached Radnor Place. Then Summer Crescent, Hyde Park Crescent, and Hyde Park Street. Well, there was no direct entrance to Hyde Park where Hyde Park Street ended - okay. I could turn left or right. Right would lead me to the lake again, so I thus decided for the other direction this time. I had to walk a short distance along the park outside, before I could enter it. I continued my way rightward, by using the narrow way, inside the park, all along the edge of the park. The idea was, to walk along the outer parts of the park today, not to traverse the park. The result would be the same. I would reach my corner, and Wellington Arch, again. But this was not as easy as though, as my way ended. This corner of the park was different than I had thought. Looking at a map first? Google Earth? Why? Seriously! Okay, I saw now that there were fountains, and I had to find my way again, but in the end? In the end, I walked along the edge of Hyde Park again, as planned, and found Speakers Corner. No one spoke, but maybe this was simply the wrong time to do so. But perhaps it was not that common that someone spoke there, and it was more of a story for tourists? Anyway, I continued my way under nice trees, a very nice alley, that would lead me to my aim. I discovered on my way a larger fountain with various naked bodies - I wasn't sure about the message. And a memorial for those who got killed on July 7th, 2005. Then I reached my corner again. And from now on it was very easy again.

A coffee takeaway, The Lodge Café, through the smaller right arch today, crossing the street. The street was, as I had seen now, Piccadilly. Okay, but the Piccadilly Circus would be in the city - or. Whatever, through Wellington Arch, down Constitution Hill, greeting Victoria - no flag, no queen? - The Mall, and St. James's Park. And what was to be said? Four wonderful black swans greeted me there. And even if they were not my aim today, I stood there for some time watching them. They were simply beautiful! But I had to continue my way - like yesterday, I walked along the lake. But not really. In the middle of the lake, there was a bridge. Yesterday I had simply rounded the lake, but today I used the bridge. I continued my way on the other side of the lake. I would not pass Duck Island today. This was simply the shorter way to this exit of St. James's Park - today I would leave the park.

Well, my aim today was the River Thames - the river should be simply straight ahead of me. The traversing street was Horse Guards Road. On the other side of the street were stairs - where would they lead? I decided to turn right, to reach the next corner. If I turn left there, at the corner, then this street should lead me directly to my aim. Turning left now would lead me to the parade ground of the Horse Guards. I could see the open place from where I stood. But I turned right.

I reached Great George Street and started to walk along an impressive house front. Okay, I had to confess, these buildings in London had their beauty and their interesting architecture. In the middle, one could see, through gates, an imposing inner yard. On the next corner, Parliament Street, all was done. Big Ben was already visible before, as was the parliament. There were two plazas on the other side of the street, and I passed a station of the underground. The bridge I could see as well was Westminster Bridge, of course. All as expected? Well, not exactly.

Big Ben was beautified with large scaffolding, such as a not very impressing motif for tourists. And the river? Well, on TV, there was always a lot of water in it, and the River Thames looked impressive - but suchlike? Not really much water in it - tides? Whatever, the same as regarding Big Ben. Suchlike, no very impressing motif as well.

But I had started to cross the bridge, half way, to look along the river. Downstream was not much. Some modern high-rise buildings afar - obviously one of the hip quarters of London. Upstream, the most prominent was the London Eye, the Ferris wheel of London. Well, foremost, ugly, simply ugly. Huge, maybe, but ugly. It was still in the morning, and there was already a queue of people - in no way would I be interested in it. So I walked back to the side of the river where I had come from, and started to walk along the river upstream.

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The first thing that I saw was, before I walked down the stairs to reach the promenade along the

river, the next statue - not a quadriga this time, like on Wellington Arch and the Brandenburger Tor in Germany - only two horses. A heroic woman on the chariot, together with two further women. And then there was also another station of the underground - Westminster Station - and a street sign, Victoria Embankment. Downstairs at the river?

First, a long pier for tourists' ships - was not interesting to me. Embankment, I wasn't sure about the direct translation, but it had to do something with going on ships, like the word "pier". As the pier ended, the next memorial, a war memorial. I read the inscription. It was the Battle of Britain Monument, as a memento of the air battles of WWII. And I really did not need a long time to go to the next memorial, the Royal Air Force Memorial. Such memorials seemed to be omnipresent in London. And it seemed not to be wrong to see therein the expression of how shocking the relentless German bombing of London had been for the English people and society. I continue my way, but only for a few yards.

A not-so-small ship. Two gangways connected the ship with the promenade, and the ship was obviously more than a ship - the Tattershall Castle. It was a restaurant, a bar, a pub - or everything? In any case, tables were on deck, and obviously, there was a restaurant under deck. It seemed as though there would be different opportunities on and under deck to eat and drink something. But at this season, on deck everything seemed to be closed, but under deck not. This could be a place for me to eat or drink something? But not for the moment.

I continued my way. As next, I underpassed a bridge, more piers, embankments, I might should have said, and there was the next monument - an obelisk and two smaller sphinxes. Yes, also in Egypt, the British had been - the French as well. The next longer pier, and the next bridge, and I decide to turn around. How would Germany look with so many monuments and statues, I asked myself, while walking back? But monuments and statues about what and whom? We had started two world wars, not so good stuff for monuments. Memorials, to remind us of the Holocaust and what Germany had done, were more adequate. I reached the ship again.

Well, it wasn't that long ago that I had had my English breakfast. I thus wasn't very thirsty, or hungry. But why not enter the ship, maybe only for a drink? But I could not simply enter the ship, as I had to realize now. I had to show my backpack to a person on the gangway - security. Well, the memorial at Hyde Park that I had passed in the morning. So, it was okay for me, and thereafter I could pass and enter the ship. As I had seen already from the promenade, there would have been different places on deck to sit down and have a drink or to eat something - but this was for summer. I found the way downstairs, and entered a nice and cozy-looking place - like a pub, it seemed.

A larger bar, for a cocktail or so in the evening? Of several tables, only two were occupied at the moment. Self-service? But then I saw a waitress, and I sat down at one of the free tables. The waitress came with the menu and asked me whether I wished to eat something or only drink something. The tables would be only for those who would eat. I hesitated for a moment, but then I said that I would eat something. Okay, I was not hungry, but a small salad or something like that? But as I looked at the menu, I saw interesting dishes, and as the waitress came again - I ordered. I had decided on the Beef Pie of the Day with mashed potatoes and vegetables and gravy as well. And a glass of rosé wine. Okay, it was not a small salad, but the dishes seemed to be interesting, and I could drop dinner.

It became a very fine lunch. Okay, the vegetables, but the mashed potatoes were very nice. The pie was especially good, but the gravy was a bit heavy. I looked out of the window - porthole - and looked at the London Eye on the other side of the river. London, an exciting city? Well, I was here because of a concert in Bristol, foremost. It was easy to fly to London, a trip to Bristol, and again, London. I had planned to spend a day in Dover as well. Would I have traveled to London only because of London? I saw no reason why, and I decided to walk back to the hotel. But not the same way back.

Back on the promenade, I did not walk back, but used the street in front of me, after crossing Victoria Embankment. It was Horse Guards Avenue. I walked along huge housing facades, one of which was the Ministry of Defense, and reached the next traversing street - Whitehall. Okay, this was the pure London for the tourists now. How many millions of times this view had been

photographed? Billions of times, most likely. And there behind would be the parade ground of the Horse Guards - so much local knowledge I had now. But I was not interested in it. I looked for a moment at the two guards on their horses, then I turned left to reach St. James's Park again. But not for long - a small street behind a lattice gate? Yes, Downing Street number ten - now I mutated into a tourist myself! I headed on - a smaller side street again. This should be, if I weren't mistaken, be the one that I had saw in the morning, the one with the staircase, after leaving St. James's Park. I entered it, and it was King Charles Street. King Charles? Well, he most likely dreamt about it, but as long as the queen still lived - okay, obviously another Charles. I had absolutely no knowledge about how many Charleses, Elizabethes, and Victorias had reigned. But I started to get it. This was, in fact, the road I had pondered using in the morning. Downstairs, crossing Horse Guards Road, I entered St. James's Park again. Back to the hotel, and this time I had even time for Duck Island and the Duck Island Cottage.

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The Victoria again, in front of me, a pint of ESB. And yes, I had to confess, such a pub seemed not to be that bad. Lot of wood along the walls, many pictures, nice tables, and comfortable-looking chairs. And yes, the other part of the pub was for dining - would I also dine there? An honest answer would be, most likely not, as it was very unlikely that I would go upstairs to visit the bar. It was difficult enough for me to just enter such a pub and sit down. Of course, only after checking through the window to see whether the pub was crowded or not. But at least I had done it, enjoying my ESB.

The man behind the counter was the same as yesterday. He seemed again somewhat twirly. But this was most likely no bad mood for someone working behind a counter. He spoke with some other guests sitting left or right of me, not with me. He seemed to see that I was not interested in having a conversation. I visited the restroom and managed the narrow, tight, and winding staircase with not much elegance - at the end, I had to duck to avoid knocking my head on the ceiling! The kitchen seemed to start to finish the day, and I pondered whether I should have another ESB - 10 p.m. my clock said.

On my seat again, I ordered another pint of ESB, as not long after the signal for the last orders came - last orders? Okay, sure, I knew the procedure, from TV, and that pubs closed early. But, this was London, and it was just 10:25 p.m. now? But I became aware that the pub would close at 11 p.m. - half an hour, and my glass was not much emptied so far. Someone ordered a last beer - half a pint? Okay, half a pint was a tiny glass. This was like taking candy from a baby.

But, with some efforts, I managed it to empty my glass some minutes before eleven o'clock, and I left the pub to walk back to the hotel. The fresh air was nice, and I realized that one pint was most likely enough for me, or I should come at least earlier to the pub. But the good thing about it was that it was an easy and not a long way back to the hotel.

## **February the Fourth**

The same procedure as every day - not really. Okay, I stood up before the alarm started, but I had felt it during the night. I stood up, switched on the TV, took a shower, carefully, and looked in the mirror. My face and head were still red! But at least the skin did not flake off. Blessing in disguise, one could possibly say - it could have been much worse! Well, my idea had been not to behave like a fucking tourist, and now I had a sunburn in the coldest month of the year? Okay, I thought, I cannot change it anymore. Thus, I have to accept it. Sunblocker in the morning from now on, and sunblocker in my backpack.

I had to buy me a baseball cap. I had always thought, in Germany, that it looked silly, someone with a base cap. But with my bald head, and for shielding my face, it made sense. Would it be as difficult

to buy a baseball cap in Los Angeles, as it was to buy a newspaper? Most likely not, I thought. I put on my apparel, the usual, packed my backpack, and left the dollar note. As I wanted to switch off the TV, they started to report about a series of muggings. I had not heard exactly where in the city. The problem seemed to be that the offenders started to behave increasingly aggressively. They talked about how this could easily end in murder. I switched off the TV and started to walk to the Metro Station.

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Los Angeles, a dangerous city. Not easy for tourists, they all said: Stay in the good neighborhoods - white and rich. But if you wanted to see the real Los Angeles, not the picture book Los Angeles? And hey, yeah, in the 70s and 80s, maybe in the 90s or so. I had read about the murder rates in American cities. Los Angeles was interestingly not among the worst cities, but cities like Baltimore - Randy Newman. Cleveland, Memphis, or Philadelphia, all way above Los Angeles! Somewhat more than one murder a day in Los Angeles. One should not compare those numbers with murder rates in Germany or Europe. And, the same number of suicides. It seemed that it was equiprobable to die in this city by murder or suicide.

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The same way as every day, it nearly felt like that. The homeless man was no longer there, but there were still many homeless people at Mac Arthur Park. The waste was still there, and it started to smell harder now. But nobody seemed to be interested. It nearly felt like this was my neighborhood and everything was like on any other day. Yeah, that was totally silly, I was aware of it. But I liked being here, among these people. The baseball cap.

No market today, a few street merchants. The market as such was most likely more in the evening? And the few there were only offered shampoo and suchlike, music cassettes and videotapes. One had belts, plenty of belts, but no caps. At least not what I wanted. I looked up the street. I had seen it before, there were other shops, after Langer's, and I could see leather goods. So, I passed Langer's, I had planned to eat there on day, and there was not only one shop where I could buy a baseball cap. I was not picky, I just needed one - everybody could see why. I decided for one with "Los Angeles" on it, in larger letters, and "California" above, in smaller letters. A black one. Now I felt prepared.

The Red Line was faster this time, but also this line brought me to Union Station. L.A. Times, table at Café Crêpe, the same waitress – also she seemed to ignore my sunburn, as she brought me the menu. Not for the beverage - triple Americano, of course. Yet, Eggs Benedict again?

I searched and thought that a Caesar Salad would be nice. A good Caesars Salad with the classic, real, dressing was something very fine. What about some fresh fruit? They offered bananas and strawberries. The waitress came, and I ordered the Caesar Salad and asked if I could get the bowl with bananas and strawberries right away on top of the Caesar Salad. She was somewhat confused for a moment and repeated my order. Only if possible, I said. Otherwise, I take the bowl with fruits separate, I said, and put them on the salad myself. She would ask the cook, and then she left.

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The coffee came fast, and I looked at the front page of today's L.A. Times. But not for long. It did not take much time, and I got my Caesar Salad with bananas and strawberries on top. As the waitress brought it to me, she passed another table, and I heard a woman saying: Wow, that looks beautiful! And it not only looked nice, it tasted nice. The Caesar dressing? Well, very excellent, but more anchovies it could have been, I would say. Anchovies, bananas, and strawberries - a fine combination!

I paid and walked back to the platform where I had arrived. The Red Line and the Purple Line ran underground here. I therefore had to use, to reach the hall or the platform again, a longer escalator

or a longer staircase. I used the staircase downward, and a man passed me by. Nice tattoos, he said. I wore, as always, a short-sleeved shirt and no jacket right now, and I was surprised. I turned and wanted to answer something, but he was already gone. Well, the States. Always polite, but without commitment - and always rushing. Well, I reached the platform, to ride to the Metro Station at 7th Street, to wait for the Expo Line again. Santa Monica again - the famous pier with the Ferris wheel? But, there was also a pedestrian area in Santa Monica, and this would be my main aim today. A pedestrian area in the USA? I had to see this!

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Still in Germany, I had seen it - a pedestrian area in the USA. If there was something I would not link to the USA, then it would be a pedestrian area. They had also been a rarity in Germany, in my youth, decades ago. But they had become normal. Every somewhat larger city had one. But in the USA?

Okay, in that sense, it wasn't the USA - it was California! It was the Los Angeles area, it was Santa Monica. A pedestrian area in Malibu? In San Francisco? Had not heard that there would be one in New York. Would it be like in Germany? With nice shops and places to sit down for a coffee or a snack? I was on my way to find out.

It had become nearly common now to ride the metro. The way to, or back from, Santa Monica? I knew it now. The museums - I looked forward to being there. And also all the other interesting sights one could see during the ride. This time I concentrated more on the last part of the ride, down Colorado Avenue, as something happened - I was somewhat confused.

I felt a little wetness on my arm. A man, a Latino, walked by, upset. An African American man shouted, started to speak, started to rhyme. I could not understand him well. He spoke very fast - nearly like a poetry slam, I thought. Did I understand 2Pac and Biggie? Nigger pussy seemed to be wrong. Then he spit around, obviously again. The metro stopped, and he left it.

The man who had walked by was there again, and asked me whether he had also spit on me. I said no.....maybe a bit. Then he showed me that the man had spit on him. In the face, and also on his jacket. He tried to clean his face and jacket with a handkerchief. He looked like someone working in an office, most likely on his way to work. That's not okay, I said. I didn't like being in the spotlight and being noticed by others. The metro reached downtown.

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I had started to walk down Colorado Avenue. It wouldn't be long to the staircase where I had seen this shopping arcade - it would be only a few yards. But my arm? I decided to follow the street longer, for a short distance, to the next block. Then I entered McDonald's, entered the restroom. Here I stood now.

I looked in the mirror. Why did this man do this? His "performance" had been interesting - okay, pretty much I had not understood. But it would have been okay, I would say. Yet, why spitting around? He destroyed everything!

I started the water run, but then I hesitated. It was stupid to spit on this man, but on me? He spat him into his face - my arm a little. I stopped the water again and looked at my face. Then I left the restroom again and looked at the menu - beverages. I bought me one of these much too large cold coffees with a lot of ice, cream, and calories. It was too cold, too sweet, too much ice, too much cream - had I to punish myself? I walked back to the staircase, to the entrance of the arcade.

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In fact, walking up the staircase, there was a shopping arcade. But I was not really interested in these shops. More interesting seemed to be that there was obviously an inner yard - round, open, an open rotunda. And, before I could enter it, there was a smaller shop where one could buy Italian ice

cream.

Well, in Germany, one could buy Italian ice cream at every corner, in every town. Many Italians came after WWII to Germany, as foreign workers, for the Deutsche Wirtschaftwunder. Many stayed. And therefore, pizza and pasta, but especially Italian ice cream, became very popular and common in Germany. Italian ice cream in the USA? I had just this American fast food drink? Well, on vacation, I entered the place.

The first thing that I had to realize was, that I did not understand how to order. In Germany, you said how many scoops you wanted and from which flavor. Here I had to choose a paper cup, different sizes, and then I could say what flavors I wanted. They just filled the chosen cup with such flavors. In the end, this also functioned, and I had a larger cup with four flavors. Some not such common flavors, American style, known from Ben & Jerry's or so, but it tasted excellent - a bit too sweet. I entered the inner yard.

Well, still nothing so interesting for me, but you could walk upstairs. There was a gallery. And upstairs, still no exciting shops for me, I saw it - Cheesecake Factory! But, was it a Cheesecake Factory, or was it the Cheesecake Factory? I had no idea! I took a look into it, but it did not look like it did on TV - or. The menu at the entrance seemed a bit confusing - after the cold coffee and the ice cream? It looked not very inviting, I thought. On my way back? I went downstairs again.

I continued my way, between two high fronts, and reached - well, Broadway. Had every city a "Broadway"? But more importantly, the pedestrian area began on the other side of the street. And, just at the beginning, Café Crêpe - another Café Crêpe. So, in any case, I thought, a good place to eat would be there. I crossed the street.

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My first impression? Again, this sterile atmosphere. It looked a bit like someone had tried to create a pedestrian area, but failed in the end. Okay, there were chairs outside the cafés or restaurants - little tables with some chairs. So far, so good. But why were they always separated from the pedestrian area as such? Sweet little fences, to give you the order: So far, but not nearer. Or was it, that you could not escape too easily? Whatever, it looked silly. This was not the idea of a pedestrian area.

I decided, after the sweet stuff, that a hot coffee wouldn't be bad. Before I would start to explore the pedestrian area as a whole. I ordered a mocha at Café Crêpe, inside. Of course, the same menu as at Union Station - would I also get a special Caesar Salad here? But the crêpes also looked good, at the other table - later, maybe. The mocha had been nice, but now it was time to walk down this American pedestrian area.

Okay, it did not help. It did not appear like a vivid place to me - okay, it was February before noon. I was not interested in the shops - Apple? But much more was not to see - I hated these separated areas to sit down. Well, at least, at the end, in the middle of the pedestrian area, a nice structure. Again, shops, but also a café with tables not separated from the rest. This looked immediately better. And then a traversing street, Santa Monica Boulevard. But it was not the end of the pedestrian area. It continued on the other side. Well, streets through parks - why not streets through pedestrian areas? This was America.

But the pedestrian area did not change - not much. There was still the feeling that all was too constructed and artificial, nothing that had developed over a longer time. And maybe that wasn't that wrong. But I moved on and reached a small green area in the middle of the pedestrian area, divided by a small plaza in it - street music. It sounded not bad, and I stopped. I stopped and started to listen. I had nearly sat down - but there were no empty benches. But, in fact, I listened to more than one song. And I even put some money in their box before I left. Not that I did not think that you should give money to street musicians, but too many people looked at me while I put the money in. I continued my way. I reached the next traversing street - it was Arizona Avenue.

But this was not the end of the pedestrian area. It still continued on the other side of Arizona Avenue. Again, all seemed larger than thought. And I started to like the place somewhat. Right at

the beginning of this part, the same structure as at the end of the first - not really? Was the whole pedestrian area symmetrical? That was what I had meant. Too artificial! I also reached the end of this part, it looked like the beginning. And the street this time? Wilshire Boulevard. Cruise to the blues.

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I had gotten hungry, but had not wanted to eat something at Café Crêpe - once a day would be enough, I had thought. But I had seen a nice-looking restaurant on Colorado Avenue right just before it had started with the spitting man. I thus had decided to walk to this restaurant, even though it would be a somewhat longer walk. I had been insecure about trying to get it the shortest way - I would have had to use streets where I had been never before so far. No experiments, I had thought. Take the longer but more secure way, back via the pedestrian area to Colorado Avenue. Then along Colorado Avenue until the restaurant. And exactly this I had done, and it had been some way. At the shopping arcade, the Italian ice cream parlor, I nearly had bought me another ice cream. To be fair, it had been not bad. But, I had thought, I would be more often in Santa Monica, for the pier, the beach, and the sunset. So, I would still have several opportunities to buy me such and ice cream at this place. And now I sat in the restaurant.

It was an Italian restaurant - not very large, but nice. It nearly felt like being in Italy - okay, I never had been in Italy so far. A nice menu with various salads and pasta dishes, perfect for lunch. I decided on a small salad as a starter, and a vegetarian pasta dish - it all tasted very fine. Well, food and America? Maybe it wasn't all that bad, as I had thought. And all at reasonable prices, even here in Santa Monica. Okay, it would have been most likely different in the pedestrian area, but this was nothing specific to the US.

The meal was really enjoyable, as was the espresso thereafter. I had nearly forgotten my sunburn, but in the restroom I could still see it easily. Still red, but somewhat better, I thought. I decided to ride back to the motel. I had plans for the evening. But a shower first, and new clothes. I sweated somewhat.

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It had become evening - it was dark outside. I had rested for a while, had taken a shower, and had put on new clothes. Now I was on my way to Koreatown. To eat something? No, I needed the Internet.

I had already seen, in Germany, that it would be difficult for me to use the Internet in the States. I thus searched for an Internet café not far away and found one in Koreatown. Nice, I had thought. Koreatown would have been an aim of mine in any way. So I walked through Westlake by night.

Such a neighborhood by night, as a tourist? Also, while still in Germany, I read comments while searching for a motel, some very crazy. Like: There was a homeless man near our motel, Westlake. We had to pass him all the time. Even at night, this wasn't fine. A reaction had been: If you fear a homeless man, it might be better not to travel to Los Angeles. And I, walking through Westlake by night?

Okay, it was not in the middle of the night, evening. Later, maybe, when walking back, depending on how long I would stay at the Internet café. The streets were full of life now, and the shops were still open. The plaza at the metro station, Westlake, was crowded. Many stalls offered everything. Plenty of clothes, a lot like shampoo or stuff for cleaning. Electric devices, even like electric drills and power saws. Much for entertainment as well. Some looked very new, some old, not to say worn. I liked it, but I had to move on.

The way to the Internet café would be easy. I had firstly to follow Alvarado Street somewhat longer, to pass Langer's again, and the shop where I had bought the cap. On the other side was a pawn shop. A possible aim? But I moved on, but only until this block ended, until I had reached 8th Street. But this crossing was very crazy now - this would be unthinkable in Germany!

On the one corner, there was also a parking lot, stood a huge deep fryer - better, two of them. Frying

open air on the street - that looked crazy! And on the opposite corner, a smaller parking lot there, they roasted meat and other things - absolutely crazy! But I liked it, and what they offered did not look bad. But I had to walk to the Internet café, and of course, it would have cost me too much effort to ask and buy me something, not to mention to eat it on the street. I was not ready to do something like this. I entered 8th Street to walk uphill.

A Mexican restaurant, two apartment blocks on the other side - you had to pass gates to enter. Did I see a security person? They seemed not to be cheap places. And several tents on the sidewalk, homeless men - I had seen only men so far, and all had been white. Was this true? Then a school, together with a strange-appearing church on my side, and a hospital on the other side. A first parking followed the hospital, then a second, smaller, one. Many shops around, and a food truck. I changed sides.

The parking called Eoss Plaza, on one side, and Goldwell Center on the other. And with all the shops and restaurants around, it was nearly a little city - already Koreatown? Well, everything was not only written in English, but in Korean as well. Dental, or Auto Sales, Karaoke, or Jui-Juitsu. But as far as I knew, Koreatown would begin later, up the street. The food truck.

Some people were there buying food and beverages. There was even a table, and one could sit down. I looked at the truck and felt hungry, but.....if still there when walking back, then I would buy me something, I thought. But now I moved on, to the top. The traffic signs were now also in Korean. I reached the corner of 8th Street and Hoover Street, a beautiful, large, building on the other side of 8th Street. There were many shops, but it seemed as though there had been better times for the red and white building. - I crossed Hoover Street.

So, now I should be in Koreatown, but not much had changed. A giant billboard, I walked downhill now. I should not have to walk for long. The Internet café should be on the left, after a parking lot. Yes, the parking lot, and then, effortlessly, the Internet café - K-Town PC. So, this was obviously, in fact, Koreatown - even if it did not look so. Did I know what Koreatown had to look like? Well, you had to use a steel staircase, in front of the building, to reach the outside.....gallery? It looked a bit British. Standing in front of the Internet café with an all-glass front, all darkened, I had to find the door. But I found it, and hesitated to enter. I did not like it that I could not see the inside. I did not like surprises. But I had to start to do things. And anyway, I could leave it immediately if I didn't like it - no one knew me here. I opened the door and entered the place.

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It was really a considerable room - several rows of ten or so computers, with an aisle in the middle. And there was a counter with a young man behind it and a menu on the wall. Sure, one could buy beverages, but also stuff like Asian instant noodle soup. The room was well filled. And as far as I could see, only young men of Asian descent, like the man behind the counter, all most likely Korean. They all seemed to play video games - first-person shooters. Well, not necessarily mine. But apart from that, the place seemed to be okay. I walked to the counter.

I told the man that I wanted to use the Internet for a certain time, and thought that I could walk to a computer now. It functioned that way in Germany: The person behind the counter told you the number of your computer, and you could start. But he asked me to create an account. I told him that I would only be on vacation. It could be that I would come sporadically, but I would be back home next month. Then he looked at me and offered me a life-long membership. It would pay if I came more often. Well, I had in mind that it would be nice to maybe be in Los Angeles next year again, but life-long? I looked not very convinced, obviously, as he made an interesting offer - five dollars! And therefore, for five dollars, I would get an enjoyable discount every time I would be in. I would see, it would be very profitable if I came more than once. And he was right. He helped me create my account, and I paid the five dollars - I was a lifelong member of K-Town PC now!

It was obvious that this was no place for a person like me who was just interested in using the Internet for a limited time. This was a gamer place, and it became obvious to me that they played against each other - at least some of them. Even in groups, if I got it. They communicated

sporadically with each other, or shouted something. One was happy and celebrated, and another was disappointed. And I? Well, it was okay, even if I was decades older than everyone else in this room - I bought me coffee and did my Internet stuff. And I stayed longer than I had planned. It was a good feeling to be here. As I had paid for today's time and was ready to leave, the man behind the counter said: See you next time! And I thought: In any case!

Well, I was on the street again, walking uphill to Hoover Street, as I looked downhill. Koreatown, there, down the street, would be Koreatown. This was definite now. But not this evening. It had gotten late. But of course, I would also walk the street down one day. Yet, it had been a long day, and I had done a lot. And now, as I had reached the crossroad again, as I had entered 8th Street once more, to walk downhill this time? The food truck was still there - even more customers now. I had to start doing things, so I waited until I was next to place an order.

Yet, this was not easy - I had not much of an idea what the names of the tacos meant. They offered tacos - so far, so good. I had listened to what the guests in front of me had ordered - all had looked good. So, I decided to order two tacos de pollo - this should be chicken - and two tacos de asada. Asada, some kind of meat, it seemed. I did not have to wait long, and I got a paper plate with four good-looking tacos. I chose a place not too near others and started to enjoy my tacos - I truly enjoyed them! And I got even more hungry! Well, yes, they offered several other kinds of tacos, but I ordered two more tacos asada, they had been delicious. And I felt the stress from doing all this - all that I had done today.

The pedestrian area, Italian ice cream, the small Italian restaurant - it all with a head, still red. I was a lifelong member of an Internet café in Koreatown now. I had ordered tacos at a food truck in Westlake and ate them together with others. I was a little proud of myself as I reached Alvarado Street again, as I walked back to the motel. There was something on the street, at the curb. It flitted under a car. Well, I thought, either a large mouse or a rat. But it was okay. I was not one of these asshole tourists, especially not from Germany.

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Again in the breakfast room - my table, and my chair against the wall, I was first. The same as the last two days, what my breakfast concerned, as well as the most important topics on TV. The room started to fill. There were a few guests from yesterday, or the day before, but many new ones. It seemed as though many guests stayed only a short time in the hotel, but maybe it was too early to say. For a person who normally had no breakfast at all, I started to enjoy it more every day. I was even close to ordering beans or something like that, but I still had four slices of toast for marmalade and honey. And, obviously, it would have been possible to order even more toast. No, it was enough. I left the breakfast room to finally get ready to leave the hotel.

The last two days, and I would do it often again in the coming days, I had walked some miles. Today, I thought, should be a relaxed day, to explore Paddington, the neighborhood of the hotel. I had planned to walk up London Street towards the station. I had seen, as I had arrived, that along the traversing street, the street in front of Paddington Station, had been several stores, cafés, restaurants - worth a look I thought. The rest? We would see. In any case, I had not planned to walk much this day.

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London Street towards the station, I reached the larger traversing street - it was Praed Street. I turned right, left seemed not so interesting, and I wanted to walk roughly towards the city, not the outskirts. It had just started to rain lightly, as I had not had to walk long to stand in front of a smaller, but nice-looking café. The name was interesting, java u, such written. Java, the computer language? Most likely not. I had just stood up from the breakfast table? But a coffee, to see how it would look inside? The window, in any case, with various pastries, looked inviting. Thus, I entered java u.

It was small inside, but a nice counter offered various good-looking sandwiches and sweets. A menu at the wall, I had to queue, some not familiar to me. A younger woman in front of me ordered a flat white, which I had never heard of, but it looked good. A kind of café au lait as it seemed. I ordered the same, and paid. One had to order at the counter and to pay right off. Where should I sit down? One large table was there - many could sit at it. And several opportunities to sit towards and along the wall, on higher chairs, all places with a socket. Okay, a place for the younger people, like the younger woman in front of me - business clothes? For people with their laptops, Apple most likely. The younger woman chose the table, where already three other people sat that she obviously did not know. I decided on one of the places towards the wall, and I looked around. One could also sit outside, as I saw now. There were a few places in a backyard, behind a glass door. Surrounded by three high concrete walls - not only because of the light rain, this looked not very inviting to me. And there was a staircase that led downstairs, most likely to the restrooms. And I noticed that many came in to fetch a coffee and a snack - the place was very busy at these early hours. A good coffee, I thought, was an adequate alternative to a café au lait.

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I continued my way on Praed Street, many small shops there, as well as tourist's stuff. And a large hospital on the other side of the street - St Mary's Hospital. Towards the end of the street, I already saw a larger traversing street, more restaurants and pubs again. Then I reach the larger street. It's Edgware Road. To my left, everything looked very new, with modern architecture. To my right, obviously, a continuation of small shops, restaurants, cafés - and most interesting? Suddenly, not all was written in English, but Arabic as well. I turn right, of course, and this way also should lead me towards Hyde Park again.

Okay, also a Starbucks, for example, but this was in any case an Arab neighborhood. Another java u - much larger than the one on Praed Street. I did not enter, but I would do so in any case in one of the coming days. And then a row of Arab restaurants, they looked very interesting. Well, Paddington was an Arab neighborhood, and this seemed nice to me. But as walking further on, the street became "more normal" again - well, a Turkish, an Italian, and an Indian restaurant very near together? Then I reached Hyde Park, the corner that I had found yesterday. The corner with the fountains, green areas, the small plaza, and the inevitable arches - Marble Arch obviously. The underground station here was Marble Arch Station. What to do now?

I had said that I did not want to walk much today, but along Hyde Park until the corner? Not to the swans today, but to the corner, Piccadilly? But not like yesterday, inside the park, today I would walk the way outside the park.

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Park Lane was not so interesting. Okay, on one side was the park, but on the other. A car dealer, not necessarily my cars. And not only because I could not afford them, I simply felt them ugly - especially the Brabus Mercedes, which looked like a tractor. But okay, I would not be among their target group. Thus, it made no difference.

Again, hotels, and again, no match. I had worked in some hotels in Germany which were among of the leading hotels in the world. But I was never truly interested in staying there. Or dreamt about it. Apart from the costs, I always felt they were too large, too impersonal, and too clean. Well, the next car dealer, Aston Martin this time.

James Bond, the old classic cars? The modern cars were, in any case, as boring as all the modern supercars. And the old, classic cars? Well, I liked classic English and Italian roadsters much more. And more hotels, residential houses, cafés, and a ballroom. The Dorchester - it all seemed uninteresting to me. It all seemed too artificial, too insincere, and too staged. More hotels, and I was eased to reach the corner.

I entered the area inside the traffic circle and looked more precisely at all the memorials. Okay, the

triumphal arch in the middle, Wellington Arch, with the quadriga. Then there was the statue of Wellington on a horse and the Royal Artillery Memorial. Smaller, two more. The New Zealand War Memorial and the Machine Gun Corps Memorial - I crossed the street and entered the corner of The Green Park. I walked along the park and Piccadilly, only a few yards, the Bomber Command Memorial, a large memorial. Yeah, they had helped to "liberate" Germany, to defeat Germany totally, and to do the best that could happen to Germany. They did what the Germans were unable to, to end the Nazis regime that they had elected. But, enough about the war, I thought, to cross Piccadilly, which was not so simple because of the underpass. As I had done it, the next large hotel, I decided to follow the street, Piccadilly, at least for a time.

The next was the Hard Rock Café, at least the London version. I was not interested in it. An entrance with a flag - The Royal Air Force Club. The same house front, the next entrance with a flag - the Cavalry & Guards Club. Blackballing, I had read about it. It seemed to be a very British institution. If you apply for a membership in a club, then they put a wastebasket in the middle of the room. Every member has a white and a black ball in hand. If only one member throws the black ball into the wastebasket then you are rejected. Why should I be interested in becoming a member of such a shitty club? This became stupid. Should I follow the street longer? I should reach Piccadilly Circus at some time, but I had - of course - no idea how long I would need. I decided to turn and walk back - eating something in one of the Arab restaurants? We would see.

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The Victoria again. Of course, I had not eaten at an Arab restaurant, but at Le Pain Quotidien again. And also, as always? The man behind the bar, two pints of ESB, problems with the staircase. Of course, no bar, no eating either. Tomorrow? I had no idea, I would decide at breakfast. The same as yesterday, every day.

## **February the Fifth**

It started to become a routine. Standing up before the alarm, TV, shower, dressing, backpack, and dollar note. I had planned to do some tourist activities today in Hollywood and on Hollywood Boulevard. Well, also the Sunset Boulevard, of course, as well as the "Strip".

I felt not bad today. Still red in the mirror, but it seemed less. And I looked forward to having breakfast at Union Station - the usual? Yeah, it all started to become a routine, and I liked it more every day. The USA - what had I expected? A USA that had elected such a figure as president? Well, the Germans had elected Hitler. They had made the NSDAP the majority party. Germany as a place for vacation, in the late 20s or early 30s? And this USA today, with this president, a place for vacation? In any case, I would say. And we should not forget that Hillary Clinton had won the popular vote. In any European country, with England as an exception, she would have become president. But, the Democratic Party had also never tried to get rid of the electoral college. Tough shit, one could say!

I sat on my bed for a moment. The breaking news on local TV this morning was the murder of a young man in Long Beach. Killed in the doorway of his block. Was it one of the housing blocks at the beach that I had seen? I switched off the TV. It would become a long day.

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While riding to Union Station, I had decided that this should become my morning routine. Riding from Westlake / MacArthur Park Station to Union Station. I could use the Red Line or Purple Line, whatever was first. At Union Station, first the L.A. Times, then Café Crêpe - always my special Caesar Salad? I could decide this after having taken a seat, I thought, and sat down.

The waitress from yesterday came, the young African American woman, and she smiled as she saw

me: The same as yesterday? With pleasure! So, it was fixed now. This would be my breakfast routine. Caesar Salad with fresh fruits on top, and a triple Americano. I looked at today's headlines. Well, I would do the tourist's stuff today. Hollywood, the Hollywood Boulevard. Sunset Boulevard, Walk of Fame, was not really interested in. But, I thought, the days so far have been very nice. So, why not something boring and stupid - just the tourists' stuff? Just so I could say that I had also done this stuff? But I enjoyed my salad and my coffee now, and then I would start to read my L.A. Times - flick through it.

Whereby, school shooting? This was the 14th school shooting in the US in 2018, according to the L.A. Times. Was this a joke or a mistake? In 2018? Fuck, we had February the 5th! And not "shooting", but "school shooting"! Fourteen times alone at schools in a five-week period? This was unbelievably sad. I saw only one idea that would help me. The thought, that I wasn't sure about what this statistic counted as a "shooting". Could it be every single little incident? On the other hand, every such incident needed a gun at a school. Okay, I did not want to know how many people around me in this wonderful station hall would carry a fucking gun with them. But at least at schools, such shit should have no place there!

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I walked back to the platform where I had come from, down the longer staircase. But I could not simply take the next metro this time - the Red Line would be my line for today. Of course, the first stop would be Westlake / MacArthur Park, but I would stay on the train for a much longer time today.

I had looked at the map of the metro lines, and Vermont / Sunset seemed to be the best station to leave the metro again - for what I had in mind to do. I had planned to walk along Sunset Boulevard for a while, and the station - Vermont / Sunset - was right at the boulevard's beginning. And at the beginning of what would be in due time, the tourist's Hollywood. I would change to Hollywood Boulevard at a certain time, as I had planned, to see the necessary tourist's stuff - Walk of Fame, and whatever. And now I was on my way to it.

Our first stop after Westlake / MacArthur Park was Wilshire / Vermont - still underground. Wilshire, obviously Wilshire Boulevard. We had underpassed the park - right? Then Vermont / Beverly - not Beverly Hills, or.....? Still underground. Vermont / Santa Monica followed. We were definitely not in Santa Monica now - Santa Monica Boulevard? Well, these streets were very long, as I knew, long and straight. Well, it would have been much easier, wouldn't we still be underground. And we stayed underground, as we reached the next station, Vermont / Sunset. I had to leave the metro.

I stood at the platform, an escalator would bring me up - North Hollywood. The ride on the metro had been faster than expected, but also more boring. A few underground metro stations had been all that I had seen - not really much. But okay, I would be on Sunset Boulevard now, I thought, as I used the escalator. And yes, some architecture was more or less interesting, but one could see more interesting and beautiful metro stations all around the world. But anyway, I stood at Sunset Boulevard now. More precisely, at the corner of Sunset Boulevard and Vermont Avenue.

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I started to walk along Sunset Boulevard. And it was no long way to see the first highlight of the day - Scientology! I knew that they were big in town - as a lot of this esoteric shit. But it felt quite different now, being in front of it - well, at some distance. I had already seen it on German TV. A documentary about different sects and cults in Los Angeles, from the hippies until today. It was astonishing what shit they had followed and followed until nowadays. And there were many musicians and actors among them - celebrities. Charles Manson, of course. But one was definite: The sect I stood in front of was the most dangerous of all.

It was good that we handled such matters differently in Germany. Scientology had its big time in Germany during the 1990s. However, some woke up and started to inform others about their scheming and dangerous ideology. It had even been a topic for prime-time news. The Secret Service

started to investigate, especially also the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution. Of course, Scientology went to court. But the Supreme Court decided that it would be right if Scientology was under observation, because of their dangerous ideas. Why did we react that harshly in Germany? Well, maybe because we had seen, in our history, what anti-democratic forces, what fascist ideology, could cause? And no question. Scientology was a dangerous anti-democratic and fascistic cult. I decided to continue my way.

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It started to get a bit boring on this very sunny day. Of course, I wore my baseball cap and had used sun blocker before I had left the motel. I had sun blocker in my backpack, and I would most likely use it again. But all these low houses, wide streets, a palm tree sporadically, a high-standing sun? Sure, this all made Los Angeles to Los Angeles, created Los Angeles, much nicer than a city like New York - especially this ocean of low houses. But shade was something rare in Los Angeles, and I wasn't a person for the sun. I loved it always to be in the shade, especially during midsummer.

I passed many restaurants and cafés as well, very mixed. Sure, the American stuff like Burger King was there, but also much Asian cuisine. A pretty lot of Asian restaurants could be found here, as I reached a freeway. Sunset Boulevard crossed the freeway, and I therewith.

Well, so far? The Scientology garbage and some restaurants, shopping centers - a huge Target center before the freeway, with a very huge parking lot. Would it have been better if I had stayed somewhat longer on the metro? The next stations would have been something with Hollywood - the Hollywood Boulevard, obviously. Should I change to Hollywood Boulevard now? I decided to follow Sunset Boulevard somewhat longer. A crossroads, two wider streets, to my left and right, somewhat offset, not forming a crossing, the next crossing. I decided to change to Hollywood Boulevard.

It was the corner of Sunset Boulevard and Gower Street, and I reached Hollywood Boulevard pretty soon. Looks not very different from Sunset Boulevard, I thought, apart from the large billboards with advertising for TV or movies. I started to follow Hollywood Boulevard - and, yippee! Good timing, I thought. It seemed as though the world-famous you-have-to-see-as-a-tourist-in-any-way Walk of Fame would begin just here - or did it end here? Well, I was not pretty much interested in on whose name I stepped now - had I to search for a special name? Not many names came me to mind. Not that I did not know Americans from the film or music business - quite on the contrary. I had been truly interested in American cinema and had studied - among others - Anglo-American literature for some years. Without a degree. No, this was by far not my problem. But why searching for such a stupid star if you know their movies or novels? Would have someone like Frank Lloyd Wright have a star? And even if, would this star interesting or his buildings. I started to get bored again.

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And I stayed bored as I followed the street longer - why I have to be here? And it became more and more tourist-like, as I entered, obviously, the heart of Hollywood - does Hollywood have a heart, Mr. Chandler? These were the places where they recorded the late-night shows - the Hollywood Wax Museum on the other side. Hey, I'm Peter from Germany. Of course, I wanna play a game with you! Why am I here? Do you mean in Los Angeles or Hollywood? Hollywood? Well, to be honest, I have not the slightest idea why I should be interested in all this fucking shit around me. Wow, this on air would be fine, I thought.

Somebody rescued the world on the other side - did Hare-Krishna still exist? Okay, it fitted to this place, I thought, as I passed a table on the sidewalk with two men behind it. I did not regard them much, as one of them addressed me - I could not really understand what he said. But I saw the books on the table - Scientology! And, obviously louder than intended and most likely harder than expected, I answered him: Keep your fucking shit! He was baffled as was the other guy behind the table - several people on the sidewalk looked at me. I took a deep breath, hoped that no one would

address me now, turned, and continued my way. This shit was too much for me!

Hey, I'm Peter from Germany. In my country, we think that you guys are a threat to democracy. We believe that you're dreaming of a dictatorship, like the Nazis did. We believe that your doctrine is fucking shit! I tried to escape, but only a few yards, Highland Avenue, a sign told me something about the best view of the Hollywood Sign. Why the shit I should be interested in this fucking sign! I was totally on the edge now.

Sure, I had seen the sign, as well as Griffith Observatory, already, while walking along the boulevard. But who the fuck had the illusion to have seen Los Angeles while walking along here, or had been up at the observatory? To be James Dean for a moment? I was an amateur astronomer and, among others, a member of the American Association of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO), but the observatory? I wanted to see Los Angeles, and not a fucking film set. I had to leave this place!

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I entered Highland Avenue, but the other way, to reach Sunset Boulevard again. Would this improve things? Most likely not, but I had to reach a special place on Sunset Boulevard. Or even the Sunset Strip? I wasn't sure about it. So I continued my way.

But it was hard. And I pondered about how many miles it had already been so far today. Was this the right strategy? I even was not really sure where my aim was. Where would the "Strip" begin? Where exactly was I currently? Okay, Long Beach hadn't been perfect. But it had been at least interesting there. Yet, this, here in Hollywood, it seemed to turn increasingly into a disaster.

I passed restaurants - seemed to be a lot of fast food here. Chicken and burgers - IHOP and Wendy's? But also Asian cuisine again - Bossa Nova? I should eat something. The bottle in my backpack was empty as well. I felt tired, and my feet hurt. Was it worth all this, only to see a hotel? Only a hotel?

Music now! First, on my side, Sam Ash - the name sounded familiar? Guitars in any case, but obviously also more. Opposite, also Sam Ash, but drums and percussion. Attached to this smaller building, Sam Ash, a huge guitar center, simply called Guitar Center - was this related to Sam Ash? It would be strange if this were a separate company. And finally, diagonally opposite the huge guitar center, again on my side of the street, Nelly Guitars - guitars once more! This whole arrangement seemed a bit surreal - all these shops for guitars in one place? Okay, Sam Ash also offered other instruments, but also guitars. Well, this was funny in a way, and I continued my way, but looking down Sunset Boulevard? The street seemed still endless, and there was no sign of the hotel either. At the following crossroads, fucking Sierra Bonita Avenue, I got desperate. I could not continue that way. I needed a rest. I needed shade. To be inside. To drink. A place on my side - Elderberries. It looked funny from outside - what the fuck would be elderberries? Whatever, I entered the place.

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It had already looked, from the outside, "alternative". But so much more inside. The first thing I thought was: It's like a Studentenkneipe in Stuttgart. A must: Shelves with books and a lot of wood - uncomfortable-looking chairs. And of course, already the blackboard on the wall told you, all organic, vegan even. No gluten or soy milk? There would be no problem here. I had the feeling that I had found a secure place to hide from the outside.

I sat down, not too far away from the door, not in the back part. The back part was for the real guests, young and intellectual. A musician was there. He prepared to sing and play - should I stay longer? I decided on a salad, water and coffee. No, simple milk and ordinary bread - whole grain, of course - would be okay. And as my salad arrived, the man started to sing - British music, The Kings?

Well, the salad tasted fantastic, as did the ordinary coffee. Sunny Afternoon - yeah, sunny in any case. Save me, save me, save me from this squeeze - yeah, save me from this shitty Hollywood. Live this life of luxury - yeah, this city was obscene and absurd. In some neighborhoods.

It felt strange to be here, inside. Would I leave the place later, and I would be in Stuttgart then, Bohnenviertel possibly, I wouldn't be surprised. That there would be Sunset Boulevard outside, this seemed strange. That this Hollywood shit was not far away, this seemed strange. Gus's? Well, Gus's seemed to be in another world. I ordered another coffee, an ordinary coffee.

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On the street again, the Sunset Boulevard, the street seemed still to be endless, with very distant mountains behind. I walked by, on the other side, the Motion Pictures Editors Guild, and right thereafter, the International Cinematographers Guild. Had I been too harsh? I had not much expected from that day - Hollywood and Sunset Boulevard. But, it had been a disaster, even worse than I had thought. Los Angeles, so much more. But was this not in every city? London? I have seen Big Ben, the parliament, the palace, and the park, of course. Paris? I have seen the tower and the river as well. Los Angeles? One thing that I knew for sure now was that whatever Los Angeles would be, it would not be these two streets, Hollywood Boulevard and Sunset Boulevard. I continued my way, partially greener now.

The Directors Guild of America, a crossing, the mountains were nearer now. Very strange and odd-looking buildings on top of them - partially on posts? In such a region with obviously a lot of erosion, Santa Monica Beach? Wasn't there something about earthquakes in this region? But in a way, it fitted to that city. And, suddenly, as this billboard was no longer in my way, I saw the hotel - the Château Marmont Hotel! Why did I have to see it?

I walked the rest of the way quickly. The Sunset Boulevard bent and appeared suddenly and dramatically less impressive - was this the "Strip" now? But this was no matter to me. I looked at the hotel, the Château Marmont. Well, one could start now with all the stories that had happened at that place - Howard, watching the girls at the pool with his binoculars. And in fact, the pool - poolside Château Marmont.

At the beginning, as she became popular, especially in Germany, I was also not sure about her. But I did something and tried to find an answer because her music touched me. However, was this music, and especially she, real, or only fake? I tried to find more of her and her music on the Internet, and it was like discovering a bonanza!

I liked her music and the way she "performed," which was very "un-American". But all those violins - right at the beginning, I had the feeling: Give her wonderful voice more space! I started to discover her early - self-made - videos, her first record, never released, as a very young singer. The second album, also never released, somewhat older. More of her early - homemade - videos. The man with the horn, she smiling - two, three, four. And her open-mic performances as well. But what had been the real turning point in this process was discovering footage from two performances - poolside Château Marmont. A very reduced piano, a very reduced guitar, and her wonderful voice. Yeah, she was real, and she was a fucking good singer! And now I looked at that hotel, the white house, Malibu Beach.

It was strange. It nearly seemed that wouldn't be the first time that I stood here. Of course, I had seen pictures of the hotel, had used Google Earth. But this view, standing at the bent of Sunset Boulevard? It seemed so common to me to be here. Like as I would be here more often. Should I continue my way? Well, I had seen the hotel now. Why should I follow the street longer? Downhill now, looked not very impressive, that should be the Strip now? But I continued my way.

I started to follow the street downhill, expensive and sophisticated-looking restaurants. Very boring-looking restaurants. The character of the street changed - more green, more restaurants. Hotels, The Comedy Store. Had I heard this before? More downhill, I would have to walk the way back! More restaurants, impressive houses, shops, beauty clinics - Beverly Hills most likely. A crossroad, no longer downhill now, the Whiskey A Go Go on the other side?

The Whiskey A Go Go - of course, The Doors. The Doors at the Whiskey A Go Go. This place seemed so familiar to me, again, after the hotel, the Château Marmont - I continued my way. And not a long

way, again on the other side of the road, The Roxy Theater - Frank Zappa at the Roxy! This is not the first time that I see it! But hey, this is my first stay - but I continued my way. Slightly downhill again, until the next bend. More downhill now again. The street was much wider once more. Sunset Boulevard, with a green median. A few higher houses at the beginning, then suddenly it looks like a suburban area. Like some moments in Malibu, green leaf trees, hedges, and you had not to ask what kind of mansions you could find behind - I looked down the road. I was here before! Fuck, this is not the first time that I'm standing here, looking down this fucking street in this fucking part of L.A.! What the fuck happens here?

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This view, down the street, it's definitely not for the first time. I had pondered about Ella Fitzgerald, living in one of these noble houses - a black woman in Beverly Hills? I fetched my L.A. Times out of my backpack - February the fifth, 2018. Okay, this was given now. It was 2018, February, the fifth. Everything else I could ponder on, but not on today's date. I decided to walk back.

Could it be simply a déjà vu? Memories popped up - Jerry's Motel! I stayed there in 2017. I was sure about it. Okay, say that I had been here a year ago, I was sure now that it had also been February. In February 2015, something happened that led directly to my wish to travel to Los Angeles - therefore, February. And where would be the problem?

Okay, it would be strange that I had forgotten everything - the customs officer had asked me if this was my first time in Los Angeles. I said yes. If this happened in 2018, and I was already here in 2017, then he would not have accepted my wrong answer! So, the custom's officer would be a memory of 2017. Flyaway bus to Union Station? This would fit to both years, but I used the taxi in my memory to get to the Travel Inn. This would be 2018. Did I mingle memories of 2017 and 2018?

The first day, Santa Monica, the white house, Malibu, the girl - all 2017? I would say so. But what did I then do in 2018? I walked by the Roxy. We had the fifth today. Could I indeed no longer remember what I did on the first of the month, in 2018 - four days ago? And today? Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood Boulevard, keep your shit, the Château Marmont, the Whisky A Go Go - I walked by the Whisky A Go Go - The Roxy. Could it be that I did exactly the same a year ago, maybe not on the same day? Especially the Château Marmont, top suit, Kik de Montparnasse - I walked by Hustler Café. Keep your shit - 2017 or 2018? Should I walk back? If there was still the table with the books? And if not, what would this prove? Nothing. And I reached the Château Marmont Hotel again.

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I pondered on what would be the best strategy now, while looking at the hotel. It all appeared still surreal, to be here - again? - seeing this hotel, the hotel looked surreal. Okay, take it, I thought. I was here last year, and I have totally forgotten it. Okay, memories of 2017 were popping up, more and more - memories of some days in 2017, the first days in Los Angeles in 2017? But if so, then I have to have lost memories of 2018 - of the first days in 2018! It seemed to be stupid both ways - Jerry's Motel! Jerry's Motel seemed to be the key to everything. I had memories of enjoying my stay there very much. But why then not also this year? Why did I stay at the Travel Inn this year, if Jerry's had been so wonderful last year? I had to see Jerry's Motel. And interestingly, I knew exactly where it was - Lucas Avenue, nearest corner 3rd Street.

There had been a metro station, at Highland Avenue. I had seen it as I had tried to escape all that shit. I thought that it would be the best to try to reach this station and then ride back. Even if it were a long way back. So I started again, walking along Sunset Boulevard - once more, the Boulevard? I was not interested in anything left or right, only reaching the station. I passed a car dealer or rental. A man asked if he can take photos with one of their cars - a super sports car - parking on the sidewalk, and his girlfriend. Yes, as long as she doesn't touch the car. Aventador, Rolls-Royce,

Mercedes V12 – I was not interested. I hurried along.

I sweated - would it be better to use sun blocker again? Looked at a window to see my red face, which seems not to be such red. My baseball cap was black, with a bear, a star, and a bar on it. California Republic between the bear and the bar - where was Los Angeles? Take it, I think, Los Angeles in 2017, obviously. With the flag or crest of California this year. Even though the sunburn seemed to be no longer there. Red from exhaustion, but not because of the sun.

I was happy as I reached all these guitar shops again - the most of the way was done. I nearly started to run, sweat ran down my cheeks, but I reached Highland Avenue. A short walk, and I saw the metro station - shall I look right, shall I try to see if the table is still there? I decided not to do so, as I used the escalator to reach the platform - Hollywood / Highland.

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The metro back, had to wait for a moment, but it had given me a moment to grasp air. Now on the metro back to Westlake, all underground, it was okay for me this time. I had found a corner alone for me. Now I could try to come down again.

I had sweated a lot, should go to the hotel for a shower. But, Jerry's Motel I should see it. And I should eat something, and I should drink a lot. I decided that a shower would be the best. Some refreshment, new clothes - it would not take that much time, and it was on the way. It was already dark as I reached the Travel Inn.

I could not decide, as I stood at 3rd Street, if I should have dinner first and then walk to Jerry's Motel or the other way around. But Jerry's could be the key - dinner later. So I started to walk along 3rd Street, downhill, until Gus's. Well, so far, I had done it not for the first time - again, it was strange.

I could remember that I had always used this route to Gus's. But, if those memories were from 2017, and I would have stayed at Jerry's Motel at that time, why could I not remember walking to Gus's from Jerry's Motel? Was this an indication that, in fact, I had mixed 2017 and 2018 so far? What a crazy mind that would be!

I passed Gus's, now uphill again, until the next crossing. Did this look familiar to me? Downhill again - the next, much larger crossing. Five streets, a dental implant center, a coin laundry, a liquor shop, one more coin laundry, and a few high houses in the background - obviously from the skyline. Familiar? I thought so. The implant center did not look very trustworthy, but most likely this was only my arrogance. Coin laundry - there was something with a coin laundry. And the skyline? I looked to see what would come next - a 7-Eleven! Yeah, the 7-Eleven. And yes, there was this inner yard with the seafood restaurant, a bit different from what one possibly expected. Yes, the food truck in front of the coin laundry, opposite the 7-Eleven, and its specialty - Tacos al Pastor. They had been fantastic!

And at the 7-Eleven, they had this assortment of coffees in different sizes, from very normal to gigantic. And you had to choose something sweet because it was included. But I had to go further on, more up the hill. I passed the bar, Latino bar, downstairs, which I had never dared to enter. And finally, at the corner of 3rd Street and Lucas Avenue, the market. I turned left, and there it was, Jerry's Motel! And cars in front, windows illuminated, obviously guests were there - what the fuck, why did I stay in the Travel Inn?

I looked behind me. There was this school. On the opposite side, the sports facilities. Kitty-corner, the school as such. And if you followed 3rd Street, first the rest uphill, then downhill, then you would reach the bridge over the highway - the Skyline of Los Angeles. All this and much more I knew now again, while looking at Jerry's Motel. But why the fuck did I not stay there? If it had been that nice, as my memory told me? How much could I trust such memories? Then I saw a sign, that I had overlooked so far.

The sign told you that Jerry's Motel would be under reconstruction in the course of the month. This would mean that it was still open right now, but not until the end of the month. But because I stayed

until the end of the month, I could not have a room there. Wow, I had found a solution! Okay, it was still strange. The last days, memories from 2017 as well as from 2018 mashed together? But possibly, maybe I should not give it too much room, now that I had realized it?

What about a coffee from the 7-Eleven? A pleasant walk to Gus's in the refreshing air? Could it help to omit places like Hollywood from now on? I looked down the stairs while passing the bar, but I did not enter it. However, I entered the 7-Eleven to buy me a coffee. One of the various kinds. Not the smallest, but in no way the largest. A medium size, enough until I would reach Gus's for lunch.

\*

I just arrived at Gus's as my coffee was empty, a medium-sized coffee. A simple mocha with ordinary sugar - no syrups, toppings, or the like. The obligatory sweet was in my backpack. I saw, as I entered Gus's, that the young Latina that I already knew was also today behind the counter. I approached and smiled, and she smiled as well.

"Would you allow me a question?"

"Of course."

"Do you remember me? I mean, not of yesterday or so, but from longer ago?"

"You were also here last year. I can remember your tattoos." She pointed to my tattoos on both lower arms. Those that the man at Union Station, while I walked down the staircase to the platform where the Red Line and the Purple Line run, found cool.

"Also in February?" It seemed that it started to get somewhat weird for her - maybe I should stop here? But she answered me.

"At the beginning of last year, in any case - possibly as well in February."

Okay, that should be enough. This was the final confirmation. We had 2018, and I had been here in 2017 as well, obviously also in February. So, I could relax again - should I now ponder on my strange mind? In any case, I should order something now. Not only one person stood behind me meanwhile. I decided on a steak with rice and beans, guacamole, pita bread, and a side salad. The soup of the day was also not sold out today. And to drink: water, coffee, and fresh orange juice. I had to catch up on a lot that I had neglected over the day.

I looked at the stars, the very few I could see. Should I review this crazy day? But for what? There was a day when I suddenly remembered that I had nearly drowned as a kid. Not that I could remember the drowning as such, but that it had happened. There had been a day when I suddenly remembered that...I....my sibling. I could remember this clearly then - the matter as such, but not the surrounding circumstances. This might be again such a day, who knows, I thought. But okay, now I had my memory back.

\*

As I was back in my motel room, Travel Inn, I was deeply lost in thought. My ad, my ad in the L.A. Times! In 2017, as I had been back in Germany, I placed an ad in the L.A. Times. A classified ad, Marketplace, Love & Happiness Is. Okay, it was a not so small ad, and even with a small picture - had cost me several hundred dollars. And, for no specific reason. I just had the feeling that I should do it, to see what would happen. And? Nothing happened! Nothing, not one single reaction!

But it was okay, and it was okay that I had done it. Doing something crazy, like sending a dark blue letter - dark blue is my favorite color. A few days before the ad - on March the 19th, 2017 - had been published, I sent the letter. Five days earlier, on the 13th.

Ms. Elizabeth W. Grant  
19562 Pacific Coast Hwy.  
Malibu, CA 90 265  
USA

I got the letter back, with a note from the US postal service: Return To Sender / Not Deliverable As Addressed / Unable To Forward - 04 / 10 / 2017. Yeah, two completely crazy things in a month, and the result had been nothing. But this was not true! I had to say, apart from what I did in February 2015, that most likely these two crazy things had been the most important things that I had ever done. And it had been okay. I think that it even had been essential, that they both yielded nothing, absolutely nothing! China Town would be my aim tomorrow.

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The beginning of Piccadilly again, the corner of Hyde Park, the corner of The Green Park, the traffic circle. I had had the same breakfast again, and again the first, sitting at the wall, watching the same program on TV. The future of Theresa May and Boris Johnson, a bit of Brexit, and most importantly, the Royal Baby - still not born. I had decided to walk to Piccadilly again, to continue my way that I had interrupted yesterday. The Hard Rock Café again, The Royal Air Force Club and the Cavalry & Horse Guards Club. I had come so far yesterday. And now?

Well, until Piccadilly Circus was my idea. Yet, I had no idea if it needed ten minutes or an hour to reach it, but I would have a whole day. So I continued my way, passing the next restaurants and high-priced hotels. Apartment houses, shops, and companies. It would most likely not be the top address in London. Yet, Piccadilly as an address shouldn't be that bad either. The Embassy of Japan, opposite to The Green Park. And well, it was all uphill, and the sun shone for the moment. Okay, it would be easily possible that it would rain in the next half hour. I had no jacket on, as the park on the other side of the road ended.

The Ritz Hotel directly near the park, the Ritz Restaurant, and the Ritz Club - nothing for me. It would, most likely, require a dinner jacket or suchlike. The Wolseley - café and / or restaurant. Did I know the name? More exclusive-looking restaurants and shops - did it start to become boring? Sure, one could buy a lot here. Exclusive clothes for both sexes, for instance, or expensive wristwatches and jewelry. Okay, for a shopaholic, it would be a piece of paradise. And yes, the restaurants would - most likely - serve fine dishes, high tea, or suchlike. One of these fine hotels where I had worked, at the Baltic Sea, had served high tea. But I had the feeling that the English way wouldn't be mine in any case. Too stilted, too fixed on money and social status, having the stick too high up in the ass. And I said this as a German, as a German from the south, not really known as the most relaxed people, even in Germany. And I fitted very well with that description. But then I reached the top of the street. A plaza, a fountain, a statue - I had reached Piccadilly Circus, obviously.

I started to orientate, a very familiar-looking sight. Okay, how often seen on TV or in pictures? Like the Golden Gate Bridge or Times Square, which were absolutely familiar to you. Although you had never been there. I had felt a similar feeling while looking at the black swans for the first time, in St. James's Park. It had been as if I had not been seeing them for the first time. And just that feeling I had right now again. Well, I had never been a "fan" of the Beatles or the Rolling Stones and had tended more to US music. Well, Eric Burdon, for instance - Cream or Led Zeppelin. Okay, but not the Rolling Stones and, by far, not the Beatles. And for the Swinging Sixties, I was simply too young. I continued my way.

\*

The next Hard Rock Café - more than in the USA? Down along the street, Coventry Street, many shops, shit for the tourists. Piccadilly Circus, a tourist's hot spot. But as I reach the next corner, Whitcomb Street, there was an interesting-looking building. Some better-looking shops, and I enter this street. But then the street narrowed with housing blocks and a parking garage. Was it a mistake to follow this street? However, I continued, and I reach the next traversing street, larger again - Pall Mall. I had to turn left or right. Right would bring me back, most likely, left was seemingly more interesting. So, I turn left and reach, after a few yards, a large plaza. And there it hit me.

It's Trafalgar Square, I thought, it's Nelson on the column. But much more so, it was the building I saw. The large building that dominated the whole scenery. It was The National Gallery - I simply knew it. I knew the front, of course, maybe from TV or whatever, but I also knew the inside. I saw a young man hurrying through the exhibition rooms and hallways, not having a moment of rest to look at one of the pictures for more than a moment. Not that he did not like the pictures. He loved them to see, but he had to move on - one picture after the other, he always felt the unrest that moved him on. He walked through every hallway and every exhibition room, and looked at every picture. And yet, he needed an incredible small amount of time. He was exhausted, as he left the building again. He was overloaded with impressions, but still, he felt this inner unrest.

I had been eighteen when I traveled to London - or better, to Dover? London, Dover, London - no Bristol, no Bristol. Longer in Dover than London, but London first. And London after Dover again. It had to have to be in 1983, after I had ended my apprenticeship, my first apprenticeship. In the first part of the final examination, I was still seventeen, just eighteen in the second part. Thirty years ago, nearly forty. I had also seen the black swans at St. James's Park. They had been the first black swans I had ever seen. Why did I have this all forgotten? Was it possible to forget something totally, to remember it suddenly again, just as if it had not happened before? I was confused as I looked at the facade of the large building, it's portico, but I did not enter - tears in my eyes as I turned around and walked back. I had only no idea whereto I should walk.

## February the Sixth

I opened my eyes, a few minutes untill nine, as usual. I would stand up, TV, shower - the same as always. But something was different today.

It hit me like a sledgehammer - this is not the Travel Inn, this is not my room! I looked around. I know this room, I know this room very well! It was my room at Jerry's Motel last year - last year? The rings over my bed!

I tried to come down. Yesterday - Hollywood Boulevard, Sunset Boulevard, the Strip, the Château Marmont. The fucking Château Marmont! I was there yesterday, in 2018, staying at the Travel Inn. But this was yesterday - 2018!

And, it was okay yesterday. It was no problem to be confused in 2018, mashing up memories of 2017 and 2018. But, if this were 2017 now, staying at Jerry's Motel, why the fuck then I had memories of what I did yesterday, in 2018? This would make absolutely no sense. I stood up.

\*

I tried to be cool and took a shower. The American style shower at Jerry's Motel. Then I dressed and started to prepare a tea. I had a water kettle and tea bags provided by the motel. I looked at the muffins, also provided by motel. Different flavors - chocolate and hazelnuts, but no banana. I also had banana muffins on the first day, I could remember. I left a note that banana muffins wouldn't be my taste, but the other flavors. Since then, I no longer got banana muffins, but the other two flavors - no banana muffins there.

I grabbed my backpack - yes, the L.A. Times from yesterday is still in it! I looked at the publication date - February the fifth, but 2017. This cannot not be!

Why could I remember that I had bought me an L.A. Times yesterday, an L.A. Times from 2018? And now I had an L.A. Times from 2017 in my hand? What a nonsense was this? I tried to remember the headline from 2018, it would have been a different one then the one that I saw now, the issue from 2017. I tried, but I could not remember the headline from 2018 - or had it been the same?

I switched on the TV - why did I not do it immediately? The news, it was 2017. The dead young man in Long Beach - 2018 or 2017? Okay, I had had the feeling yesterday that all what I had in

mind so far was from 2017, except the Travel Inn. If one changed Travel Inn to Jerry's Motel, then the story would perfectly fit again. The way to the Metro Station would change therewith as well, wouldn't it? I at least thought so. So, could it be that the question wasn't 2017 or 2018, but Travel Inn or Jerry's Motel? Could this be the solution?

\*

What would be the best strategy now? Did I really have "memories" about 2018? I would be a prophet then, and I would know the future. What did I read in the L.A. Times the last few days, TV? It was like one of those dreams, when waking up, and the dream slipped increasingly into the nirvana of oblivion. Okay, I said to myself: Whatever has happened in the last few days, this is 2017, and I stay at Jerry's Motel. Could it be as easy as this?

\*

I left my room - Jerry's Motel, in the middle of Los Angeles. The building of the motel looked strange, like it had been forgotten, surrounded by housing blocks two or three floors higher. Jerry's Motel had - was this standard for motels? - two floors. My room was on the upper floor - the last one in the corner - 11. Jerry's Motel appeared small, looked tiny, surrounded by these larger housing blocks. It was indeed small. A few rooms, not more, very well located, for a very reasonable price. It always got superb comments, especially for cleanliness and regarding value for money. So, it was also my choice - at least in 2017. Why did I know that I could not book a room there a year later, because of reconstruction? A pity, an old motel, with charm and charisma, from the 1940s, would be no longer. Why did I know that I would miss the rings over my bed in a year?

I walked to the corner of Lucas Avenue and 3rd Street, looked down 3rd Street. The way to Gus's, it would not be for the first time, would I walk in this direction. Just on the first day, my first time in Los Angeles, soup of the day - it all always resulted in something nonsensical. And yet, why could I remember my first arrival in Los Angeles so well, but there was nothing in my mind regarding my second arrival? Because it was 2017? And yesterday had been 2018? But also then I had only memories regarding my first arrival - this was nonsensical. I decided to ride to Union Station.

\*

I turned left, crossed Lucas Avenue, then 3rd Street, and passed the school. On the other side of the street were the stadium, the field, and even a swimming pool. I could, as always, see through the two glass doors, the reception with two women behind. A school like a fortress. I had a memory - from 2017 or 2018? Down Lucas Avenue, there was the schoolyard, protected by a high and heavy steel fence. One morning, a bus was standing there, Lucas Avenue, before the gate to the schoolyard, and students entered the bus. And, a security officer supervised everything, the few feet the students had to walk from the gate to the bus. I looked at him, and he looked at me, and I thought that it would be most likely better to continue my way to 7th Street. And why had I suddenly in my head that there was this kindergarten? Also protected like a fortress. I had never seen anything such as this in Germany, or any other country!

I continued my way, 3rd Street, downhill, the large apartment block on the other side. Of course, also protected by a fence, most likely not a cheap place to live, until 3rd Street split. I chose, as always, the right street. Behind me was this club, or whatever it was. If returning to the motel, Jerry's Motel, in the evenings, and using this way, it had opened. Uphill again, to the bridge, or better, the two bridges, over the freeway. The freeway the FlyAway bus had taken on its way from LAX - and if driving back to LAX? - Whatever.

This was the moment I left Downtown West and entered the world-famous Downtown Los Angeles. And it was the moment when one had this spectacular view of the skyline of Downtown Los Angeles - of course, especially at night. There were always photographers there, in the evenings, to

make images of the skyline. The bridge was sometimes nearly crowded. I simply crossed the bridge, not more.

On the other side, downhill again, I reached Figueroa Street and, of course, The Westin Bonaventure Hotel. Yeah, exceptional architecture, the glass elevators at the glass fronts - a bouncer in front of the door. And I knew, I would not like staying there. So I continued my way, following Figueroa Street, passing high houses, restaurants, miro, and more, until I hit 7th Street. Okay, one thing was interesting. Between two high blocks on Figueroa Street, one could see a very interesting-looking building. It would be the next street. I should visit it over the next upcoming days. Should I ask myself now, why I had no memories of this particular building? Or had I never visited it? It was all nonsensical. Whatever, I could enter the Metro Center at the corner of Figueroa Street and 7th Street - a stunning and representative entrance.

The Metro Center at 7th Street was very familiar to me now. Only that I had in mind that I always just stopped here, coming from Westlake Station, to continue my ride to Union Station. Or, to change the metro, to change the platform, to change the levels, if riding to Santa Monica or Long Beach. But I entered the Metro Center this time, for the first time?, by using the entrance at 7th Street - at least in my memories.

\*

It was all like always, at Union Station. I bought my L.A. Times, from 2017, and walked through the hall to Café Crêpe. The African American waitress came, smiled, and I nodded with my head. Caesar Salad with bananas and strawberries on top, triple Americano. I looked at the headline of the L.A. Times, my aim today would be Chinatown. A new line, the Yellow Line, at a different part of the station. But first I enjoyed the rest of my coffee, with my newspaper in hand.

There was an insert in the middle of the L.A. Times today about real estate. It was interesting to see the sizes of the advertisements, and the prices of the respective properties. Most of the pages had many small advertisements with small pictures, with prices up to \$750,000. These were the normal prices for a condo: \$500,000 up to \$750,000. Then there was an ad, not larger, for a condo with an ocean view - \$1,000,000. I tried to find the ocean in the picture, but I failed. Left and right green, trees most likely - and yes! Between the green, there was a bit of blue! Okay, a bit of blue, \$250,000 on top.

This would mean, a condo in one of the housing blocks in Santa Monica or Long Beach with a view of the ocean for at least \$1,000,000, most likely more. Not only in Malibu, your neighbors were all millionaires. Malibu, such offers, up to tens of millions of dollars, got more space. Eight of them on a page. To make it short, in the middle of the insert, in fact, an ad over two hole pages - a property for \$150,000,000! Well, this was L.A. - not perfect for a person with an income like me. And I started again to ponder about my little problem with my mind.

The Union Station, could this be the link between 2017 and 2018? The Red Line and the Purple Line? The Caesar Salad with fruits on top, or the triple Americano? The African American waitress? Gus's of course? The FlyAway bus? There could be some links, but what should that mean? I could remember one arrival, and this was most likely a mix of 2017 and 2018. I could not remember a departure. I looked at my L.A. Times - February the sixth, 2017. Okay, I said, let's have a nice day and see where you will be awake tomorrow. Chinatown waited.

\*

Chinatown, the Yellow Line - a coincidence? At least in Germany, Asians were sometimes called - in an abusive manner - "yellow-skinned". A coincidence, obviously. - The Yellow Line.

One had, to reach the Yellow Line, to walk to the normal platforms for the trains, in contrast to the Red Line and the Purple Line. More precisely, it was the first platform coming from the wonderful hall. And there I stood now, waiting for the next Metro, to reach Chinatown. And something else was different. Compared to the trip to Santa Monica and Long Beach, it would be a very short trip.

Exactly for one station I would be in the metro, it would be even wasted time to sit down. So, as the next metro arrived, after a short time, I did not sit down, and looked out of the door.

As said, it was a very short ride, and therefore not much was to see. A short time straight on, still in the area of the station. Then a bend, a very short time, then the next bend, and we had reached Chinatown Station. I left the metro again, and had to orientate for a moment.

I had to use an escalator down to the next level in any case - all looked a bit "Chinese" but in an artificial way. And now? I could use the next escalator - or staircase - to reach the street, or to walk straight on this level and follow a way between two high buildings. I knew that Chinatown would be in this direction. Thus, I followed that way, until I hit a street - it was the Broadway, not for the first time. And the question was, left or right? In what direction would I find the world-famous entrance to Chinatown?

Well, the street to my right looked more "Chinese" - just diagonally opposite a "Chinese" building. It looked a bit misplaced. But I followed this direction, and in fact, I had not to walk long to the famous gate on the other side of the road. Well, it looked a bit like a piece from one of these silly kung fu movies.

In my youth, during my apprenticeship, I sometimes accompanied a colleague, an older cook, to the movies - late-night movies. One was always a kung fu movie. He was totally in love with these movies. Well, the other was a porn movie - I was fifteen or sixteen at that time! The woman selling the tickets always had only one question: Kung fu or porn? She also always asked me! And, of course, I always said kung fu. Whatever, I had seen many kung fu movies in my youth, and this gate looked very much like one seen for a thousand times in such movies.

I started to walk around the plaza somewhat, but it seemed not very interesting. A jazz club, but, this was Chinatown? Polanski? I had no idea. Should I walk the other way down the street, Broadway? But here was the gate - here Chinatown had to be! I decided to enter the bakery that I had seen just near the gate - Wonder Bakery, Wonder Bakery in Chinatown. But inside?

It was a very interesting place inside! Ice cream, a great variation of cakes and cookies, bread - wow! The inside was very different from the outside! There had been two tables and chairs in front? Well, it was a nice morning. I decided to buy myself a delightful piece of cake and a coffee, to sit in front of Wonder Bakery in Chinatown. I had my L.A. Times - I would read my L.A. Times in front of Wonder Bakery in Chinatown. Okay, I was not long in Los Angeles so far, but I had never seen someone reading a newspaper so far - I had never seen someone reading anything so far. Well, anything like coffee culture and Los Angeles did not seem to fit.

\*

I did not sit for a long time in front of Wonder Bakery, enjoying the delicious cake and my coffee and reading my L.A. Times. An older, Asian, man came and asked if he can sit down at my table as well. A Chinese man, obviously. Okay, not that I would have been able to tell whether he would be Chinese, Korean, or Japanese - but this was Chinatown? He said something about seeing me reading the L.A. Times, a newspaper, and I answered something about how it was nice to sit here with a nice cake and a coffee. He listened to me, then he asked me whether I was from Germany - my accent. I agreed. And as you could see, he liked my answer. He started to talk about his time in Germany.

Not long after WWII, in the 50s, he had been in Germany, as a soldier, in Heidelberg. He asked me if I knew Heidelberg, and I could tell him that I would live not that far away from Heidelberg. Also at the river Neckar, in the region of Heilbronn. He liked it, and he started to relate about his time in Germany and about his experiences in Germany. And it seemed as though he would have liked that time very much. I was, more than once, unsure if I should ask him something, but I did not dare. So I just listened to him, and it seemed that it was nice for him, that someone listened to him.

Then he started to talk about Chinatown. Whether I would know that this wouldn't be the original Chinatown. I had to say that I had no idea. He told me that the original Chinatown had not been far away. The area where Union Station would be today. As they decided to build a train station there,

all the Chinese people had to move - nobody asked them. They just had to leave their houses, and they got nothing for it. They built a new Chinatown. Hollywood had built this movie facade, today's Chinatown. This Chinatown for the tourists. His mood seemed darker now. Then he asked me a question that I was not prepared for in any way. He asked me if I knew the difference between the German people and the Japanese people. I had no real idea what I should answer him. But then he told me.

The Germans, he said, regretted what they had done during WWII. They felt ashamed about it. They asked for forgiveness. The Japanese, he said, had never regretted anything. They had never felt ashamed about anything, and they had never asked for forgiveness. And, I maybe would not know it, but what the Japanese had done, and not only during WWII, had been even more cruel than what the Germans had done. But they had never asked for forgiveness.

This shocked me, for several reasons - I had absolutely no idea what to say. The Germans had murdered millions of Jews in the gas chambers and had started WWII. Could I judge the Japanese people? And I was not really sure about what he meant. Okay, I knew that Japanese culture had its dark aspects. I knew the classic Japanese movies. Akira Kurosawa, for instance. Most of his many movies. But we were the masters of death - Paul Celan. *Death is a German-born master / death is a master from Germany - der Tot ist ein Meister aus Deutschland (Death Fugue - Todesfuge)*. I had no idea how to react!

I looked at my watch - over two hours, we were sitting here now. I said something that I would have to go now - of course, this was a lie! But I had no idea how to handle this situation. He reacted very politely and thanked me for having listened to him. And I walked back to the metro station. As I was between the high houses again and the station in front of me, I looked back. Had this been okay? Should I walk back? Would he still be there? Should I have said more? I had been totally unable to cope with this situation. As I sat in the metro again, for one station, I cried, like I cry now sitting in a pasteleria. I felt like a coward. Like I would have failed the test. I had gotten a chance, and I had wasted it - I even had not asked him his name. And I felt that I would regret this very much one day.

\*

On the patio of Gus's in the evening again - broasted chicken today, soup of the day had been sold out. I had done some research about the old Chinatown and the story the old man had told me - Wikipedia. And he had been quite right. The old Chinatown had been a very different place. And yet, what was real, what only a claim? Prostitution and crime? Whatever, the replacement of the people hadn't been right. Or, as Chomsky had said - Profit over People.

And also what he had said about Hollywood. This arch, this plaza, was nothing more than a fucking Hollywood facade. So real as a Western city in an old Western movie. So, the real Chinatown - even the real Chinatown of today - you could not find there.

The man, of course, I wouldn't see the man again. This opportunity I had missed. I could never thank him, for telling me about Chinatown. And about the Germans? It was not for me to judge us Germans. But it had been interesting. The difficult relationship between China and Japan, not only since WWII, for a much longer time. The first Sino-Japanese War, during WWI, WWII, Nanking.....even earlier - it was too much for me. And the trivial insight. History depends very much on your perspective. And yet, hasn't the Chinese history also been a history of wars with all their cruelties? I had tears in my eyes while walking back to Jerry's Motel.

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At the corner of Hyde Park again, like yesterday - apart from that, it was the other corner. Not the one with the traffic circle, the lower one, but the upper one, with the fountains. There where Oxford Street began. The famous Oxford Street.

All had been as usual in the morning, apart from the insight, that this was not my first time in

London. Eggs and all the other elements of my daily breakfast, Theresa and Boris, the baby was still not delivered. I had stayed in the City of London, I was sure about it now, the last time in London, as a young man. Also, a very narrow hotel, upstairs. I could remember to carry my suitcase up the narrow staircase. It had not been the one I had with me now, it had been the one with the checked pattern - tartan pattern? I still owned this suitcase, but it had no rolls like the one I used now. Yes, in the City of London, but I could not remember much. Breakfast? Most likely, but I could not remember. I could remember the breakfast in Dover very well now. I had planned to walk along Oxford Street today.

Oxford Street, what a narrow street - one of the arteries of traffic in London. Well, everything in London was narrow. It was an ancient city, narrow and nested. Very soon on my way, one of the few modern buildings in this part of the city, on my side of the street - everything for shopping. Not my world. And these modern buildings not necessarily made London nicer. Marks & Spencer on the other side of the street, but I was still not interested in shopping, even though I knew Marks & Spencer. But just the next building, a small side street between, the next London shopping icon, Selfridges. A huge, really huge building, that could fulfill all your shopping dreams - where would Harrods be? As a young man, I had been there, Harrods, in a small side street. I could remember that it was not on one of the famous streets, somewhat apart from all. Should I try to find Harrods? But for what? I continued to follow Oxford Street.

Restaurants and shops, shops and restaurants - was this London? I had again this feeling of boredom, as I passed Bond Street Station - was this the famous Bond Street? I could not find a street sign "Bond Street". Well, anyway, I did not need a new suit. Oxford Street had become even narrower as I crossed New Bond Street now, a fine distance after Bond Street Station. But, was New Bond Street the same as Bond Street? Whatever, I finally reached a larger crossroads. Oxford Street and Regent Street - which of the streets should I follow? I decided to stick with Oxford Street.

But then I got the feeling that this would lead to nowhere - walking back? It would not be really thrilling, I thought. I could turn left for a while. The worst should be to reach River Thames. However, turning right again after a while should bring me back. I should hit one of the parks again, Hyde Park or The Green Park, at least in theory. I entered Poland Street.

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Everything changed very fast now. No more of these shops, distinguished shops, but bars and cheaper-looking restaurants. Could this be Soho? I knew Soho very well - had seen enough of the old German Edgar Wallace black-and-white movies. Soho, dangerous, crime, prostitution, murder! Well, okay, very narrow streets, but dangerous? Frankfurt, the one at the river Main, the neighborhood at the train station? Even I had not dared to enter the smaller side streets there. A police car and, in no real distance, a junkie in a house entrance with a syringe - one of the larger streets there! Compared with that - if this was Soho in fact - this neighborhood looked fine. Had I been in Soho as an eighteen-year-old? I could not find any memory. Well, I followed the street, until it ended - left or right? I turned right, and immediately right again, to continue my overall direction. I followed Lexington Street now. A very narrow one-way street, and I reach the next crossing. Brewer Street was the traversing street, back to the parks? Slightly offset, Great Windmill Street, to continue in my direction?

Great Windmill Street, a very narrow one-way street, but with many pubs, shops - Fiorucci - and a windmill nightclub. At least it appeared to be a nightclub from the distance. I entered this street, a nice pub, right at the beginning, the Duke of Argyll - should I take a rest? But I walked on and reached Shaftesbury Avenue. It was a wider street again. London was seemingly more "civilized" again. Theaters, cinemas - entertainment seemed to be here. But no longer as bars and nightclubs. And, I could see it from the corner, to my right, not far away, the fountain of Piccadilly Circus. I had reached a point that I already knew. And now? Well, before I would decide, maybe it would be the most clever to rest for a moment, to eat something, and to drink something? Although not at the Hard Rock Café, I looked around the corner, the street downhill. It was Haymarket, and I saw a

nice-looking café not far away. I entered it, Caffé Concerto, and started to ponder about what I would do here, in London, as some school girls walked by. English schoolgirls in their uniforms - was it nice to wear such school uniforms? I would not like it, especially as a girl. You have to wear a skirt and black tights, a blouse and a blazer, not to forget the tie. And if I liked to wear trousers and a sweater? The British way was not my way, as I enjoyed it sitting in this charming café. But, always walking along the streets and looking at shops I was not interested in? Okay, I was here for the concert in Bristol, to spend a day in Dover, but London?

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Yeah, in The Victoria again, in the evening, but things started to change. No longer the man behind the counter, but a woman, a woman with her own style.

"Hello, Darling!" she had said. "What can I do for you?" Well, this was an English pub? "A pint of ESB," I had said. Knowing that she would say this to all the customers. Nevertheless, I had not expected to be addressed like that in a pub, an English pub in Westminster.

She was a very nice-looking woman, hardly to say how old, but I had the feeling that she was not such young, and she understood her job. She was not as overexcited as her male counterpart, but that only strengthened her presence.

What should I do tomorrow, after this boring and disappointing day? A day in Paddington, or doing some tourist's stuff like Tower Bridge and the Tower of London? I had no real idea as I ordered my second ESB. It would become my last, simply because I would not be fast enough to empty it and to order a third one before the pub would close. Even "Hello Darling!" did not help much.

## **February the Seventh**

As I opened my eyes, I started to look around in the room I was. The clock, eight minutes until nine o'clock. So far, so good. I saw a lengthy room, looking down my bed, that fitted Jerry's Motel. It wouldn't have fit the room in the Travel Inn. I saw a shower. It was a walkable shower, American-style. This fitted Jerry's Motel as well. The Travel Inn would have a bath tube. I looked to my right. The dresser with the water kettle on it, tea bags, and muffins - Jerry's Motel. I looked, at latest, at the wall over my bed - the rings on the wall. It all matched - this was my room in Jerry's Motel. So I could stand up, do my morning routine, and start to relax.

The way to the Metro Station, at the corner of Figueroa Street and 7th Street, as always. The school, the bridge, the skyline, the Westin hotel, miro, the station. With the Red Line, was first, to Union Station.

L.A. Times, February the seventh, 2017. Caesar Salad, fruits, Triple Americano. The African American waitress - Expo Park, the museums there, would be my aim for today. I ultimately started to relax.

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I was trained now, so I did not ponder about it. Back to the Metro Center at 7th Street, Red Line again. Changing levels, platforms, and trains - tap again. Waiting for the Expo Line, the known way towards Santa Monica. Despite that, today's ride would be much shorter - only until Expo Park / USC. I did not look so much outside.

The metro train was more crowded this time. A young Latina sat opposite me - her phone on her ear. Well, it was not to fail to hear what she said, obviously speaking with a girlfriend. But it was not fine to follow the conversation.

She had wedding concerns, wanted to go to school longer, and feared losing her dreams. How old

she is, I asked myself. Eighteen maybe? I wanted to say something to her. But, apart from the fact that I would not dare, could I even do so, even if I dared? Was it on me, an older white man from Germany, never married, no children, to give her wedding advice? Do not do it. Give it time. Finish the school. Try to hunt down your dreams. Those would have been my advice. But would that have been acceptable? I found no answer. As the metro reached my destination, I stepped out. On one side of the street was the entrance to the university - the main entrance? Anyway, not my aim. I crossed the street, the other side. First the Natural History Museum, then the California Science Center, and finally the Rose Garden, that was my plan.

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As always, I hurried through the halls and exhibitions, looking at all the exhibits, animals, bones, and skeletons. Well, I had indeed found a few moments for the garden in front, and I even found some time to read at least some of the information given. But apart from that? It was always like something would hunt me. I always had to move on - could not stand still for more than a brief moment. Of course, the dinosaurs were impressive, and the birds were fascinating. In the end, all was interesting and worth examining carefully, but not me. I had always felt that inner turmoil - I had to move on, move on. But two exhibits were capable of letting me stop for longer. Better, to return to them because they were placed right at the beginning. The oarfish and the megamouth shark.

The oarfish was impressive and looked really strange, but the megamouth seemed to touch me. It felt strange, looking at him. A fish from the deep sea, very different, not created for laying here, dead, I thought. This was not his place. His place was far away, deep under the surface, far away from us humans, living in a very different world. I felt sad, seeing him lying here, dead. Yeah, he would have to die, as we all had to one day, but on the ground of the deep sea. I left the museum, and yes, it was a very fine and interesting museum. Nevertheless, I was in a strange mood as I headed towards the Science Center.

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I walked to the Science Center. The first thing that I had to realize was, that I would have to pay extra for visiting the Space Shuttle - not very cool, I thought. Well, we had two excellent technical museums in my region of Germany. One was very near, the other not far away. Cars, trains, and especially many interesting planes. Both, the French and the Russian supersonic passenger planes, for instance. And, as an exceptional attraction, the Russian space shuttle, the Buran. Okay, this one had never seen space, and only once had a Buran shuttle even been in a near-Earth orbit. But it had been fascinating to see Russian high-tech! I would never even have dared to do tests with this shuttle. Nevertheless, I thought, I will not pay extra for the American version and entered the Science Center. Of course, I also hurried there through the halls and exhibitions - had no real time, for nothing. And, I also had the feeling that this museum was not as fascinating as the last one. Okay, the part with the satellites and the lunar missions. Yet, at last, I even needed much less time to come to an end, here at the Science Center. I was a bit disappointed as I entered the Rose Garden - a rose garden in February!

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Yeah, one can doubt whether it makes sense to visit a rose garden in February, but I liked it. Okay, of course, it would have been, no question about it, beautiful, to see all these different roses blooming. You could imagine all the different colors, sizes, and scents. But it would have been, needless to say, something very different over the summer. And yet, even now, this rose garden did me good.

A rose garden, like in Stuttgart - Rosensteinpark, Schloss Rosenstein. Not so large, but nicely

situated up the hill. A little gem surrounded by a much larger park. This rose garden was larger, and was such an outstanding sight in this city. Palm trees, normally, leave trees surrounded this place, with real green grass. This place could be everywhere. In London, Berlin, Paris or Rome. And in Los Angeles, of course. And, of course, the park's layout was inspired by European castle gardens. And, as a center, in a classical way, a fountain - of course not running in February. But even I was able now, to sit down on one of the benches, and simply let time pass by.

It had been strange days - this was my seventh. Twenty-eight days it would become - the first quarter was over. There had been some very nice impressions, some bad moments, and a lot of confusion. The feeling of being able to begin to understand this city. Others said that it would be a city that did not exist as such, fragmented, like the whole nation and its citizens. And a feeling appeared, like in so many of her songs, of a bad relationship. Too much would be to quote now - the feeling of love and hate infusibly entwined. This city, that I knew now, after these days, could have a hideous face. The fascists at Sunset Boulevard, the rip-off at Hollywood Boulevard, or the night bar under the freeway. But there was Gus's, Downtown West, eating on the street. There would be a different Chinatown and a different Koreatown, and I loved Santa Monica Beach. I hoped to live at the ocean if I was finally old. Could this be my place? Los Angeles? But which Los Angeles could be my place? I felt deep love, and even deeper disgust. Could this be my place?

After a while, after sitting at the fountain, I started to walk around again, leaving the Rose Garden again. But not towards the street, the metro station, Exposition Boulevard. The way I had entered it, towards the science center. I followed the way in front of the museum to my left - I just wanted not to return so fast. I knew that here in this area would also be the Olympic Stadium, but I wasn't really interested in it. Which Olympics had it been? The one without Russia, Reagan, and Afganistan, I thought, but more I did not know. Anyway, I just wanted to walk for a while.

Not long, and I hit the next street - well, it was Figueroa Street. Follow it? It would bring me back to downtown - it would only take some miles. But more interesting was the passenger plane there, a DC-8. But you could not enter it, like the planes shown in the technical museums in Germany. And I saw an entrance to another interesting-looking building, most likely another museum. I walked there, and it was the California African American Museum. Well, I had used Google Earth, in Germany, to get some impressions. I had seen the two museums where I had been - and the Rose Garden, of course. Even the Olympic Stadium, but not this museum. Okay, it seemed smaller, but....had I to ponder about it? Whatever, I thought, now that I have seen it, let's visit it. But, it had not opened today, I would have to come on another day. Well, I thought, it's only the beginning of my stay. This should be possible anyway.

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Back on Alvarado Street, in front of Langer's. I had planned to have dinner there today, but the door was closed. Of course the door was closed, it was after 4 p.m. The opening hours at the door told you that the place was only opened from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. - hadn't I passed Langer's recently, walking to the Internet café, in the evening? Was it closed? It had been after 4 p.m. in any case. It was confusing. In any case, I would not have dinner at Langer's today.

Langer's, had already found this place in Germany. No. 19, the world-famous pastrami sandwich - would I have to eat it? I had read on their webpage that the customers could park their cars in a safe parking lot, right at the restaurant. It would be a somewhat rough neighborhood, but the customers should not be concerned about that. Whatever, I would not be their guest today. And I liked this area. One of the other restaurants in this area? I looked at my clock. Early enough to have chances to get a soup of the day today. I walked to Gus's - it seemed as though this would be my place of shelter in the evening, like Union Station in the morning.

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Nothing had changed in the morning. Neither with my breakfast nor with the news on TV - the same old news. And now it had become early afternoon, and I sat in the java u, the larger one, at Edgware Road. I had spent the time in Paddington, but I had not made much and had not walked for a longer time. Le Pain Quotidien at Connaught Street, java u at Praed Street, I had spent a time in the train station. And now I sat here, java u, at Edgware Road.

Well, this java u was, in fact, much larger than the one at Praed Street. A larger offer in cakes, but also in sandwiches and suchlike. But you could also have lunch here - dinner? It seemed to be a really nice place, and I pondered what to do with the day. London so far?

Not very thrilling, in a way, simply boring. Well, I still had some plans, for later, after the concert. Kew Gardens could become a high-light. I was sure that I had not visited this park as a young man - I could remember that I had been more or less always in the City of London or the nearby areas. Later, back in Germany, I saw pictures of the impressive glasshouse and was very disappointed that I had not visited it. This time, I would do so.

The Tower and Tower Bridge? Okay, it would be strange hadn't I seen the Tower Bridge, but I could not remember that I would have visited the Tower or that I had seen the crown jewels. Should I? Should I visit the Tower, looking at the crown jewels like a tourist, walking over Tower Bridge? How do I reach it? Well, in theory, it would be easy. Walking to the River Thames, following River Thames the direction of the last time. It would lead you automatically to the Tower and Tower Bridge. The distance? I wasn't sure, but it seemed simply insane to do so. The underground? Opposite the train station was a station of the underground, I had seen, and it was no long way. I paid and walked to the underground station.

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I had no distinct plan as I stood in front of the entrance to the underground station, but I had only to look. To my left was a list of lines that this station served - five lines? Well, the station did not look that big. Looking down the stairs, I saw a smaller hall. But the more lines, the better. Much more important was the map of the underground to my right.

I had to orientate, but then it became obvious. I could use the Yellow Line, the Circle Line. This line would bring me to Tower Hill Station. This sounded good, so I entered the station. I had also seen that the Green Line, the District Line, would be the line to reach Kew Gardens. But the line split, at least once, but maybe that would not be my problem for now. Now I would have to buy me a ticket, and then I had to find my platform.

The hall was indeed small - five lines? Yellow titles, not very clean-looking, some ticket machines at the wall. I felt moderately disoriented and had to wait for a moment, then I stood in front of one of the machines. A public servant would be there, but he helped somebody else. The Circle Line would always be the inner zone - that should be easy. But, an Oyster Card, maybe? Or would be a day ticket be better? What was "off-peak"? Then I heard a voice.

"May I help you, sir?"

"Oh, yes, please."

I told him my aim, back again, and he recommended me, because it was after 9:30 a.m., a normal "Off-Peak Day Travel Card" - easy, or. And no, I had no Oyster Card. After it all, he also showed me my way to the platform as well - a very fine service, I thought. For a second, I was a bit surprised that he did so, but then I became aware that the station was most likely not as small as it seemed at the first moment. Well, five lines, possibly at different levels or so? Whatever, I knew my way now, and so it was easy to reach the platform.

Standing at the platform, this was no normal underground station. I was definitely below street level, but I could see the sky! Partially a glass roof, but the rest was open. This meant that all around were houses, but in the middle was a hole - very strange, such as I had never seen before. The underground was underground, but for a moment, here at the station, the tracks laid open, below street level, like one would have removed the upper part of the tunnel of the underground - my underground arrived. I entered it, and we started our ride. For a brief moment in sunlight, then

we entered the tunnel, the underground.

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Sometimes it was interesting, when all your prejudices got confirmed and all the bad stories turned out to be true. The underground was loud, cramped, and looked sordid. It was uncomfortable and shaky to use it - it would be nothing for me every day. I thought about Stuttgart, the underground there. But maybe this was unfair? If not wrong, then this was the oldest underground railway system in the world. Perhaps one should be a bit more lavish. Whatever, because all the time underground, and the stations were not very appealing, the ride as such was relatively boring. I was not unhappy as we reached Tower Hill Station and I could leave the underground. It was nice to reach the street level again and to breathe fresh, somewhat cold, air once more. It was cloudy, but at least it did not rain. A first orientation.

Well, I stood in a kind of small park. The Tower was just on the other side of the street, simply called Tower Hill. A map and information were right here - I could use a pedestrian underpass to reach the other side of the road. But I decided to stay for a moment in the park. As always, various statues and memorials. One was much larger than the others, chastening, seeing all the names. I crossed the street there.

This also seemed therefore clever because a wide way for pedestrians led down to the river on the other side of Tower Hill there. To the left was the Tower of London, and to the right was a large building with large letters on it: "Tower Of London". This had to be the right way to reach the entrance of the Tower of London. And in fact, a few yards, and several machines to buy you a ticket - thirty pounds! Well, okay, this was London, but thirty pounds for what? To walk around there, to look at some jewelry? I hesitated and decided to walk on, first towards the entrance of the Tower, maybe to the river.

A "Tower of London Shop" - they provided you everything a tourist could dream of. Or interested in fish & chips? The "Welcome Center" next door. Then I reached the entrance of the Tower of London. There were not many people there, and I spotted why, as I saw the opening times. Closing at 5:30 p.m., but last entrance at 4:30 p.m., that would give me roughly an hour to visit the tower and the gems. And this all for thirty pounds? Well, this was only the beginning of my stay in London. Now that I knew it, I could come back, but most likely I would not do so. I decided to walk the rest of the way to the river - there was still the Tower Bridge.

So I stood at the river again, with not much water in it. A larger warship was on the other side. The HMS Belfast that I could see, the bridge was in front of me. Also on the other side of the river were some modern architecture that appeared to be silly in this city, the Traitors' Gate on my side - and the bridge was still in front of me. I tried to remember what the young man had done, but not much I could find. Nothing about the Tower, the bridge seemed partially familiar. But okay, this was one of the most depicted landmarks in the world. I did not feel any impulse to enter the bride, so I decided to follow the river somewhat, towards the City of London - or was this already the City of London? Anyway, it did not help, quite on the contrary.

On the other side of the bridge, Tower Bridge, I saw a group of people celebrating - a fountain with a dolphin and a girl. They had a nice time - younger people, all dressed up, business people most likely, all in a good mood. Sparkling wine or most likely champagne, I got sick of this! Away from it, was my feeling. I followed a wider street uphill, the Tower now to my left. The street led me back to the underground station, Tower Hill. Back to Paddington, was my impulse now, and I knew that it would be best to follow this impulse!

## **February the Eighth**

The last two days had been very nice and interesting, even if not easy in some ways. Chinatown,

Wonder Bakery, and my conversation with the Chinese man. Exposition Park, the museums, but especially the Rose Garden. But now I sat on the edge of my bed - did not know how to react. I had woken up in the room of the Travel Inn again.

An L.A. Times from 2018 on my knees, which I had bought yesterday, in 2017. I watched the fucking news from 2018, still this disaster of a president in office, and I asked myself: What happens here?

Time-jumps? Was this a crazy movie, or was I the crazy guy? It seemed easy the first time. Only the Travel Inn seemed to be wrong. But now, back in 2018? What would it be tomorrow? Could I breathe a wish? What about 2017?

I took a shower, dressed, the dollar bill. I left the room and entered the parking lot. The Valley should be my aim today.

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The Red Line would be my line today, but not towards Union Station. The other direction, until its final halt. Then I would have to change lines, but this all had just time. Even if in 2018 again, even if I used the Red Line in the other direction today, my first way would be the same as every day - Union Station. I was on my way to Westlake Station.

I reached Alvarado Street, and Westlake Park was on the other side. But something disturbed me. The park had been so far a place for many homeless people. Right at the entrance, there had been already many tents. They all were gone! Well, not all. I saw police officers speaking with some remaining homeless men. Two police officers escorted another homeless person out of the park. Were they no longer accepted in the park? And now, Skid Row? I was somewhat disturbed, as I entered the station.

The Red Line was first, and I reached Union Station. The same procedure as always - L.A. Times, walking to the hall, Café Crêpe. It was a nice, warm morning. So I decided to sit outside. I had pondered about it already before, but had always decided to sit inside. I waited until the African American waitress would come - maybe she had already seen me? After a while, someone came, but not the African American waitress. I started to become insecure. She had a menu with her and gave it to me. I ordered a Triple Americano. I would need a moment for the rest, I said. Did matters start to shift now? Was Union Station no longer a constant? MacArthur Park as well? Should I ask her about my special salad, which I had eaten over the last few days? I had no idea how to act or what to order, as she came back.

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Well, while sitting on the Red Line, this would be nothing new to me, at least until Hollywood / Highland Station. All underground, some metro stations - not much to be curious about. And most likely, this would also be until the Red Line's final station.

Universal City / Studio City, the next station, as expected, still underground - this would be the station for the movie freaks, obviously. I? Well, at the time of videocassettes, I had hundreds of them, all with two or three movies. Recorded by German TV programs. The Germany TV channels broadcasted many series of movies by certain directors at that time - ARTE, for instance. Thus, I also knew most of the movies by American directors like Scorsese, Coppola, or Altman - Kubrick and Ray. De Palma and Peckinpah, of course. Those and many other directors, the good classic American movies made by directors - not this Hollywood shit that one could find above.

North Hollywood was the next station, the last station of the Red Line, but by far not my final aim for today. In a way, the trip just started now. But until the end, underground, I left the station and saw sunlight again. I would no longer use a metro train, a bus now, even if it were still part of the Los Angeles Metro System. But okay. I would thus see more of the city again, now that the metro had underpassed the Hollywood Hills and had reached The Valley.

Well, "The Valley"! The first time that I heard it, "The Valley", I in fact imagined a valley - a European valley. Narrow, a street in the middle, something like that. Although then, I discovered

that this "valley" was by no means a valley with maybe some houses, but a massive high plateau. A million people lived there, or even more. And fitting for the City of Los Angeles? A part of it was part of the City of Los Angeles, but by far not all. I would stay all the time in Los Angeles.

But now I had to see where my travel would continue. I crossed a street, Lakershim Boulevard, to reach the bus terminal. Well, it should not be difficult. Only one line, the Orange Line, Line 901, and still a part of the metro system - I had my TAP Card. I needed a moment, but then it was obvious where I had to wait, simply to wait for the next bus. And, as normally, I had not to wait long. The bus came, I entered it, tapped, and sat down. Now I would have time to discover "The Valley". And the trip started with a real surprise.

The bus did not hit the normal street. It instead used an extra street, but not the regular street. The bus had a street of its own, at least right now, in the middle of the regular street, and was zoned on both sides by trees. It seemed as though someone had planned a metro track, but had forgotten to lay the tracks at the end. So, no metro could use it now - buses had to run the service. But this had consequences.

A good one? Well, having its own street, the bus could drive fast. Sure, the bus also had to cross crossroads, but it seemed as though the bus would have priority. In any case, this would make the ride much faster. Negative? Well, many trees left and right? It was not so easy now to see the city. But I liked driving on my own street. It was not long, and we reached the first halt - Laurel Canyon Station. Now I was somewhat puzzled. First, I always thought and imagined that Laurel Canyon would be on the coast of Malibu. But apart from that, we were pretty much in the city, no canyon at all was to see? Okay, maybe I just could not get it.

Valley College Station, fewer trees now, and no longer in the middle of a street. We had a single track now. Woodman / Valley Glen, again more trees, mostly housing areas with some shops and restaurants I could see. Van Nuys Station, not much had changed - I was obviously in Van Nuys now. Sepulveda next. A huge building on one side, and enormous parking on the other. Then we underpassed a freeway, and we still had a single track and reach Woodley Station. Well, still always the same, more or less, and many more stations still to come. Balboa Station, not long ago - does this ride start to get boring? Less and lesser seems to be seen - open fields, and we crossed the Los Angeles River. I was sure about this time, again with very little water inside.

Reseda Station, housing areas again, as far as could be seen. Tampa Station - Tampa Bay Buccaneers? Or was this silly now? Pierce College, still mostly trees, but I should come closer to my aim. De Soto Station, it got no better. Canoga Station next - fewer trees, at least some to see. And in fact, the trees got less, and it all reminded me of riding to Long Beach. Sherman Way and Roscoe then, my aim came nearer. Nordhoff Station, all was very straight now. But after some bends, I reach, at last, my final aim - Chatsworth Station. The final station of the Orange Line. I step out, I had to orientate.

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Okay, it shouldn't be that complicated. The pedestrian area, and the shopping center, should be simply straight on and very near. Okay, "near" could be maybe a matter of discussion in Los Angeles, that I had learned now. But straight on, continuing in the direction that I had come with the bus, that should be manageable in any way. And, on one side of the bus station tracks from the trains, a street on the other, that limited the opportunities very much, to fail. So I started to follow Old Depot Plaza Road. And hey, not much I had to walk, a larger traversing street, it was Devonshire Street, there I was! On the other side, a parking lot, the building of a supermarket - would I have to call it a mall? Okay, I saw no pedestrian area, but maybe behind? Whatever, I crossed the street, the parking lot, and walked around the building, the Chatsworth Plaza. Well, I could not see that there would be anything like a pedestrian area here. Had I made a mistake?

Well, I was here, so I entered the place, Chatsworth Plaza - not many were in, nearly nobody. Okay, now I realized it, also the parking lot had been nearly empty. Two floors, different small shops, but

most of them were closed, even empty. The place seemed nearly to be dead. It was a strange atmosphere here - repelling, cold, dead. Not a place where I would like it to stay longer. I left the mall again.

Okay, for America most likely not large - but wasn't this a prosperous neighborhood, The Valley? I was very disappointed, it had been a long trip. First the whole Red Line, then the whole Orange Line, the bus. Okay, in a way, it had been interesting as such, but the outcome? No pedestrian area I could find, and a shopping center with more closed shops than open ones? I was hungry and thirsty - a restaurant. The first one that I saw was closed - forever, it seemed. Then I found a smaller place, but for food and beverage enough in any way. I sat down, ordered something, and started to ponder on what happened right now.

All had begun so nicely - the first evening at Santa Monica Pier and the beach. Malibu also, it had been very exciting - the white house, the reading woman. Gus's in the evenings was wonderful, Downtown West and Westlake. I had a life-long membership in a Korean Internet café now. But since Hollywood and Sunset, everything seemed to crumble. I had no fucking idea any longer in which year I lived, or, better to say, in which year I would wake up tomorrow. I had no real idea any longer whether something belonged to 2017 or 2018. Maybe I even lived already in neither of these years? And now, the trip back - long enough it would take - without anything? This all seemed to be fucking!

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I started to walk down Devonshire Street. I did not dare to use side streets - no experiments today. The Valley, all flat and right-angled streets. This seemed not to be very stimulating. Obviously, it was not the worst place to live, with enough money and being white. I had at least the feeling that I had not seen many African Americans, Latinos, or Asian people, if at all, so far. It was a bit like in Long Beach, and it was not much different in Santa Monica, I had to confess. Did I start to hate this place, Los Angeles?

I passed by a larger shop for gardening. Plants and all the equipment one could need. Yeah, sure, looking at the people shopping there? One could live here, being a good person - why not? But living in a nation that sensed all these differences and discrimination as natural, maybe even God-given, that had elected such an asshole for president? Was it better in Germany? In a way, yes, of course! Bernie's agenda? I fight for paid sick leave - hey, Bernie, we have this already for a long time all around Europe. I fight for maternal leave - hey, Bernie, we have this already for a long time all around Europe. And so on, and so on. He would have no agenda in Europe, at least not this one. On the other hand. The unequal distribution of wealth was even worse in Germany, if I were not wrong, in no case better. I decided to walk back to the bus station to ride back to Westlake - where I would prefer to be, where I could come down again.

The bus ride was over, next would be the metro - I looked around. There was a café, a restaurant, suchlike, in an old-looking building - Groundwork Coffee Co. It looked like a building from the old time of American railways. Inside also a lot of wood, somewhat indie-style, students, a kind of version of Elderberries. I ordered a medium latte and a fried egg sandwich. They had an enormous selection of coffee, chai, hot tea, matcha, chocolate, not to mention cold drinks and seasonal specials. A nice place, not very cheap, but fitting for this area - did I have any idea about this area, or Los Angeles as such? In any way, it tasted delicious, and I could start the last part of my trip back.

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Dinner in the evening, not Gus's today. Gus's would have been nice, in any case, but something different would also be okay for today. And, I had already seen many alternatives, and I was here in Los Angeles to try things. El Pollo Loco, Alvarado Street, just around the corner of the Travel Inn,

had been my decision. I had seen the place more than once. Now I entered it.

Pollo, that had to be chicken. I was relatively sure about it. Pollo should be Mexican - or. Fast food, obviously. But if it were bad, I could leave the place again - I would not have to eat there. My first impression?

The interior, as expected of a fast food restaurant - it looked a bit like Burger King to me, but with a lot of plastic. There was a salad bar with various things and toppings - guacamole. It had not to be bad. But what astonished me right from the beginning as I entered the place? Well, the counter normal, menu above, as expected from a fast food restaurant. But there behind was an open kitchen, and I mean open. One could see everything. And what could one see? Well, a massive grill with an open fire and a man roasting chickens on it! Gosh, this would have been simply unthinkable in Germany, alone because of fire prevention regulations. And most likely because of hygiene regulations as well. Although it seemed like the man at the grill was a professional, and the fresh roasted chicken smelled superb - of course I stayed!

I sat on my plastic bench - 4 pieces chicken combo with rice, coleslaw, and tortillas in front of me. Of course, I had also visited the salad bar. I felt a bit misplaced now - only Latinos around me, no longer like being at "The Valley". Oh, the couple in the other corner was Asian. Okay, I had to be fair. I liked being at places like Groundwork Coffee some hours ago. And I had liked being at Elderberries. But I liked it here as well - the fresh roasted chicken, the coleslaw, the rice, the tortillas, the extras from the bar, the guacamole. But why had it to be that sitting Elderberries or such a place that you were always among "your kind", the whites? And sitting in such a place, I was the only white person now. Okay, this was my eighth day, and I should be careful, but the United States had never been known being a melting pot. This had been a lie from day one on. However, salad bowls and patterns or suchlike? Such theories could also not be really satisfying. Could it simply be, that the USA was still dominated by groups of wealthy white families, from Western Europe, that increasingly feared losing their dominance in politics and the economy? Gosh, a "nigger" had been president! If this were possible now, where should this all lead to?

I finished my delicious meal. Okay, the variation of beverages could have been somewhat better. Then I had a nice little walk, down to MacArthur Park. No homeless person was longer to see. As if there were never only one. I walked back to the Travel Inn. What a year would I wake up tomorrow?

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The same procedure as every day. Standing up and taking a shower, dressing, and walking to the breakfast room. The first, as always, and the same seat as always. The same breakfast as ever, the same boring stuff on TV. No baby also today, and still not named - what a national tragedy! Today? Water, I was always attracted to water. The water here was the River Thames. I stood up, after breakfast, to pack my backpack and to walk to the river, with no distinct aim.

The parks. I crossed Hyde Park this time, and made a stopover at St. James's Park. The black swans, beautiful as ever. They would not be the same as those that I had seen, as an eighteen-year-old - what was the life span of a swan? The rest of the way, passing Big Ben and the parliament, a bit more water in the river bed this time. But by far not like in all the pictures.

I decided to walk along the river, again in the direction of the City of London, for no special reason. The worst would be to reach the Tower, maybe earlier this time? I passed the Tattershall Castle - eating something there, later? - and the first bridge. A closer look at the bridge this time, a small one for pedestrians first, then a wider bridge, for trains obviously, and again a small one for pedestrians. Why were there two small pedestrian bridges, one on both sides of the train bridge? It seemed as that there would be a train station - should I take a look? But I decided to continue my way.

The obelisk again, the two sphinxes - I read what was written on the plates. And just across the street, I could see the next smaller statue, but I did not cross the street. I walked to the next bridge, one for cars, a more modern one, built of concrete. And always piers on the river, and the next

special-looking ship. The Wellington, one could enter it, looked a bit like the Tattershall Castle. But smaller, and no tables on deck. Although maybe there would be a pub or a restaurant inside - on my way back? And a memorial at the bow of the ship, and one at the stern of the ship, on the promenade. Still memorials all the way, and many more bridges.

Three more bridges now. The first was for cars, the second for trains, roofed? But, no train station, most likely. Whatever, the third bridge was obvious. I had seen this bridge often enough on TV - the Millennium Bridge. Yet, it would still be some yards to reach it, and in a distance, I could even spot Tower Bridge, and this stupid high building - there was no fun anymore, as Monty Python would say. I decided to walk back, with no idea whereto I should walk - just back.

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I had nearly reached the Tattershall Castle again as I had just underpassed the railway bridge - eating and drinking something on the Tattershall Castle? The train station that was most likely there? I always liked it much to be at train stations, or airports, at all places where many people arrived and departed. I decided to enter the first street after the bridge. It was Northumberland Avenue. And hey, at the end of the avenue, uphill, I reached Trafalgar Square again!

Should I visit the National Gallery? It would be, in any case, very interesting - many fantastic paintings there. To visit it again? But I was in no good mood for art. And I felt somewhat sweaty. It had become an unpredicted sunny day. As I walk around aimlessly, I decide to enter Whitcomb Street again - back to Piccadilly Circus? Back to Soho? I started to get some local knowledge. I reached Coventry Street again. Heading left, I would reach Piccadilly Circus again. And the street with the many cinemas and theaters, Soho and the bars and nightclubs. But I decided to walk straight on, and Whitcomb Street became Wardour Street. I had seen a gate.

A gate, an Asian gate, a Chinese gate, I stood in front of. It looked at least as kitschy as the one in Los Angeles or in San Francisco, as artificial as those. Chinese restaurants - London and Chinese cuisine. I had read about it as a young man, and I had planned to eat at least one evening in one of these Chinese restaurants.

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Eating in London was not necessarily something that made you happy. But, the young man had read, that some of the best Chinese restaurants outside China could be found in London. That London had a large Chinese neighborhood - the largest outside China? - and fantastic offers of Chinese cuisine. So he had planned to have dinner in one of these real Chinese restaurants. And he had entered Chinatown therefor.

Well, many Chinese restaurants, one after the other, and not only one street. So, he decided for one, more or less spontaneously, and had to walk upstairs. A very sophisticated-looking room with tables for more than two as a rule, even a considerable round one. But when the waitress showed him a table for two, he sat down, took the menu, and started to feel uneasy. Should he stand up again and leave? It would be not the first time doing something like that. He tried to stay calm and ordered something to drink, and a menu with a soup, a salad, and a main dish. He would never come back. It would not count, and he started to sweat - where would be the restrooms?

As he ate, the place started to fill, and later nearly all the tables were occupied - all with Asian people, most likely Chinese people. He sweated a lot now. Well, the meal had been hot and delicious, drinking his hot tea. He thought about how the other customers would see him, the waitress. A dessert, yes, even more sweating. Still not seeing where a restroom would be, to try to cool down a bit. And at the end, the waitress brought him a hot towel on a small plate, and he had absolutely no idea what to do with it. Was it because he sweated so much now? He looked at the other tables, but they all still ate. Yeah, he always ate very fast, and he had begun earlier than all the others. He paid, downstairs, on the street again.

The cold air was good, and he walked around a bit. He was happy about that he had done it, eating

in such a restaurant. He often enough even not dared to enter a place. But he was disappointed about that he had again reacted this way, sweating a lot. Sure, the meal, but this wasn't it. It was his constant insecurity, his inner unrest, and the fear of attracting attention that made others look at him. Nevertheless. He was just eighteen, had flown to London, had spent a longer time in Dover, and had eaten in such a restaurant. And the meal had been very fine - what a contrast to the English steak house at the beginning of his stay! London and English restaurants. With Chinese and Indian restaurants, London could be a very fine place.

## February the Ninth

Okay, Jerry's Motel again - but did this have to worry me? My L.A. Times, which I had bought yesterday, in 2018, was from 2017 now, as well as the news on TV - this devastating president seemed to be a constant.

Well, the morning routine, as always, tea and muffins inclusive. A commercial for skin cancer treatment on TV, not for the first time - a constant? Union Station had already started to lose its status as a constant yesterday, and there would be no Union Station at all today.

My today's aim would be Elysian Park - no Metro today, only by bus. The easiest way would be to walk to Alvarado Street, to a bus stop there. But this would mean that I would pass Gus's - thus, why not have breakfast at Gus's today? It simply seemed to be natural. I left my room in Jerry's Motel, and the dollar bill on the cushion - still a constant.

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As I reached Gus's Drive Inn and entered it, it was easily noticeable that this is was also a place for having breakfast. Okay, so far, I had always been here in the evenings, but I was by far not the only guest this morning. And I had also always ordered dinner here. Breakfast, but nearly always the same, only at Union Station - the breakfast menu at Gus's?

A lot of different sausages - eggs rancheros? Ripeye steak with eggs on the breakfast menu? Gosh, even with pancakes? Who would eat a steak with pancakes for breakfast? What about ripeye steak with French toast? It started to get more and more absurd, but I had to order something. Bacon and eggs should be easy, I thought, as the woman behind the counter asked me: Over easy, medium, or well? I had no idea what she meant - over easy. If I would like to order more - I added hash browns. That would fit? No, that's all, but a coffee and a natural orange juice as well. I sat down and waited, but not for long, and my breakfast arrived.

A large plate, the eggs flipped - yeah, the United States. But the egg yolk was still fluid - very nice. And I also had two slices of bread as well, butter, and marmalade - maple syrup was on the table. And this was a smaller breakfast. No steak, or something else. In Germany? I had there no breakfast at all - this would be enough until dinner! But, it all was fine - over well would be with a no longer fluid egg yolk, I thought. Yet, what would be over medium then? Wow, would it had been possible to get normally fried eggs, sunny side up, as they were called in the States? This I knew. They flipped them in the US because they did not like it, the fluid egg yolk. But I had had no idea about all the variations - eggs rancheros? Could it be that breakfast in America could be much more sophisticated than I had thought - again being too arrogant? *Take a jumbo across the water.....*

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As I had reached Alvarado Street, I turned left. The next bus stop would be right at the crossroads. It may sounded stupid to a European that buses in Los Angeles did not do more than drive up and down the same street the whole day long. But with a system of right-angled streets, especially of such length as in Los Angeles, it was an easy and very practical system. I entered the next bus, used

my TAP card, and we started to ride along Alvarado Street.

Downhill, and very soon we underpassed the freeway. Typical Los Angeles housing area, I thought, as not much longer after we had reached Sunset Boulevard and I had to leave the bus. I would have to change the street, so to speak, and therewith the bus line. It had been Line 2 so far. Now I would use Line 4, along Sunset Boulevard. But not in the direction of the Hollywood shit, the other way around.

Some higher buildings now, many restaurants and cafés - Sunset Boulevard? How many miles would it be to Elderberries from here on? Many in any way. And to hit the Pacific Coast Highway? Even more! Wow, and it didn't take much time and we reached the bus station where I had planned to step out - Sunset / Portia. This had been a very short ride compared with yesterday - I even had pondered whether to walk the way. It would have been theoretically not that difficult from Jerry's Motel on to reach Elysian Park by using smaller streets. But, I had already walked many miles over the days here in Los Angeles, and I had planned to explore Elysian Park today by foot! Thus, I would make my miles today easily at Elysian Park. So it would not be a luxury to use the bus to Elysian Park, and also for the ride back.

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I started to walk up the street, Portia Street, which should lead me to the park. Interesting houses there - a few palm trees, but many leave trees as well. A lot of green, in any case. One had not to think about that this was a "better" neighborhood and that living here would not be very cheap. But yeah, it looked charming here. And if you could afford to live here, obviously, no bad choice. These were my first impressions. And? It was still morning, and it started to get hot - uphill. Okay, I had my cap on, had already used sun blocker in the hotel, and had it with me. Not much should happen. At the top, the street forked, but it was easy. I had to turn right, and after a very short way, I was there, Elysian Park.

At least more or less. The park had looked like a simple park area on the map, but it by far wasn't. Los Angeles, very hilly, and the park was pretty much. I stood at the edge of the park. I could, left and right, along the edge of the park, follow a trail, on the same level. But if I headed straight on, then I would have to walk downhill. Well, so far, so good. But most parts of the park were obviously much higher situated. It would be a constant up and down. And, again, I had totally underestimated how large this park area was! And where was the Dodgers Stadium, this huge stadium? I started to follow the trail to my left.

And it was not uninteresting as such, but was this a park? Well, in Europe, it would have meant green grass, many trees, and a lot of shade. However, here in Los Angeles? A lot of brown soil, a few trees, bushes, and traces of shade. I had to walk downhill at the end and hit a street. Better, a junction of various streets. Heading further on, sweating, what would be my aim? This park area was much larger than I had thought. One of the streets would bring me back - most likely, with no shade at all. I could walk the trail back, but I decided to take the street anyway. And I was lucky. After some down and up, I reached exactly the point where I had started. Back to the bus station?

Well, that would have been a very successful exploration of Elysian Park, I thought, would I give up now. I could also follow the trail to my right, as I just did now. Again, down and up. The same brown soil with a few trees and bushes. I finally walked towards a building that looked like a tenement. And, in a far distance, I had found the Dodgers Stadium now, at least so far as I could see it - it was highly situated. Why had I thought that it would be easy to see? But even from afar, it was obvious that this was an impressive structure. And, I saw a beaten track that would lead me back to where I had come from, on a much easier way. I used it.

But not long later, and I saw an opportunity to reach a street - a street that could bring me back to Portia Street, a street with shade. Although, to reach the street from the park, I would have to use a staircase at the side of a house. Would this be allowed, or would this be private property? Okay, all the stories about Americans and their private property? In any case, this was not Texas, and I did not fear getting shot dead, but I wasn't interested in running into trouble either. But it would only be for

a very short way, and the shade? Well, after some hesitation, I did it, and reached the beginning of MacBeth Street. This street I could follow now, I would hit Portia Street, back to the bus stop, this was my plan now. But it did not function.

Well, I walked downhill and had to realize that MacBeth Street would not lead me to Portia Street again. In fact, the street ended very fast again, by hitting Sutherland Street. Okay, this would be a street parallel to Portia Street, so if I walked down this street, then I should reach Sunset Boulevard as well - at least in theory. And walking uphill? Why should I? Maybe because of the interesting building that I could partially see? I walked uphill and had to realize that Sutherland Street was a dead-end road in that direction. But this was okay, while looking at the St. Andrew Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA. It seemed a bit misplaced, but was this already Little Armenia? I knew that such a neighborhood existed in the east of Hollywood. But this wasn't Eastern Hollywood - or. Anyway, I liked seeing this building. It reminded me of the orthodox church in Stuttgart. I had visited it once while I studied the history of art in Stuttgart. However, I then started to walk down Sutherland Street, to reach Sunset Boulevard again. And in fact, it functioned! I was back again. Well, Portia Street was indeed the next street, the bus stop, but I had to eat something and to drink as well. I decided on Patra Burgers On Sunset.

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Koreatown? Well, not really, not now. I sat in the Internet café again, as a member now. I enjoyed my coffee, the coffee wasn't bad. Not only that, but I had bought me also some snacks, had spent quite a time here. Of course, I did not kill others online, as most did here, if not all, but anyway. I was the only one not of Asian descent, most likely Korean descent, but anyway. I liked being here, even if I was the foreigner now, for more than one reason. But it seemed okay for the other people in the room - apart from one or two exceptions, all men - and it was okay for me. Nevertheless, the time here should be only a prelude for the upcoming. I would walk down the street today, and today I would visit Koreatown. The real Koreatown, not only its periphery.

As I had walked down 8th Street, I hit Vermont Avenue - yes, this looked much more like Koreatown. Large billboards, Korean-written, Korean restaurants and shops on the other side. What way should I choose? Well, it was already dark, and this was my first time here. No side streets in any case. Maybe it would be no bad idea to stay at Vermont Avenue, walking along this street? Left or right? I turned left.

I saw many restaurants and shops while walking down the street, but I could not decide, because I did not dare. Hey, I was a cook - not much that I had not eaten yet. I knew many kitchens, also Asian kitchens, but these were obviously very authentic ones. Not like Chinese restaurants in Germany - not that Chinese at all. Or Japanese restaurants offering you a lot of sushi, as if sushi were the only Japanese food. No, these would be authentic Korean restaurants without any doubt. I do not like too spicy food, this could be a real problem, I said to myself, as I reached a large crossing - Olympic Boulevard - El Pollo Loco on the other side. But this would have been embarrassing - not in Koreatown. I decided to walk back. I saw all these restaurants once more, and once more I could not decide - I reached 8th Street again.

It starts to get silly, I thought, especially because I would be truly interested in the food. If I ran into difficulties - too spicy, for instance - there would always be alternatives. On the other side of the crossroads, Vermont and 8th, I saw a row of shops and restaurants, a parking lot in front - this such typical American arrangement of shops and restaurants. One of these, I said to myself, as I crossed 8th Street, anything else would be a joke. I decided to Book Sae Tong. A window with large pictures of food, all looked interesting, so I entered the place.

It became immediately obvious that this would become something special. Some guests, they all were Korean. On their tables were many small bowls. Some of what was inside I knew, but much of it I didn't. It was hot. Maybe I would not attract too much attention if I were ultimately sweating? I sat down. The menu?

Okay, some sounded very normal, but others didn't. I loved food like the cheeks of cattle, liver, or tripe. They offered cow tongue, an absolutely delicious food, or pork belly. OX Stomach and intestines? Should I try something like that? What about all the small bowls? I felt the impulse to leave. I had already gathered attention. So I started to panic.

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It had gotten cold, and I had to wear my jacket, while walking up 3rd Street. I had chosen a somewhat different way today to walk back to Jerry's Motel, back from Koreatown. I had eaten something, but it felt like a disaster. And yet, in the end, had it been, in fact, that humiliating, or was this only my imagination? I had walked alongside MacArthur Park and had looked at all the tents, as a woman had quickly approached. I had looked at her.

"Do you know me?" She had asked with an empty voice.

"No." I had answered.

And as she had passed me, I had heard her saying something like, "I've broken myself."

Should I have asked her, "Why?", as she disappeared in the dark.

But I would have reached the motel in a short time - my room, could close the door, as I saw the food truck on the other side. I crossed the street.

I had ordered three Tacos al Pastor, and was now sitting on one of the plastic chairs in front of the coin laundry. Not that I had been still hungry, but it simply did me good. More or less a third of my time was over, and I did not know what I had to expect from the rest. Should I buy me a coffee as well at the 7-Eleven on the other side of the street? I would pass the Latino bar downstairs and would yet again not dare to enter. But maybe a coffee at the 7-Eleven? I felt empty and sad.

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Should I eat something different today? I asked for this sitting in my regular place, as always, as the first in the room. Ham or bacon maybe, but in no way beans or sausages - other cereals? They talked about Theresa May's future on TV, like every day. Which one could definitely say was, that the Royal Baby still was not born - why? Sorry, but if, who would dare to talk for more than one minute about another topic or the world-moving question about its name if the baby were a part of the world now? No longer covered by the mother's womb. No, this was definite, no baby, as they continued about what Brexit would mean for the UK. Well, everybody knew now that Johnson had lied, not to mention toxic male asshole Farage - but would this be a reason why Boris should not become the next PM? And we still had mummy Angela.

I stood up, after I had my usual breakfast, and packed my stuff, to leave the hotel. I started to walk along Sussex Gardens, a nice avenue in any case, to reach Edgware Road. But near to it, I changed my mind and entered a smaller street that would lead me to Praed Street - and then? I had no real idea. I had just started to stroll around. It was Sale Place that I entered, and as I reached Praed Street and looked straight ahead, I saw something. It seemed that, after a short distance, there would be an open space, and water. I had walked along Praed Street more than once but had not noticed this so far. But it seemed interesting, and I entered a very strange place, a huge plaza. Because the plaza was completely surrounded by higher houses, it was not notable from the street, only through the gap, right opposite Sale Place.

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It was a large plaza - not wide, but very long. Left and right high houses, in between the long plaza, or better, the long water. It seemed to be a lake - a very elongated lake. All the houses looked modern, a sheer contrast to Praed Street, this seemed to be a different world. This place could be anywhere, but not the architecture on the other side. In any case, this place was obviously new, not long-standing like so much architecture in this city. I started to explore this area.

Okay, the first part was, in fact, a plaza, a plaza around a kind of lake, all right-angled - with a large wooden isle inside, all right-angled. One could enter the isle, green on it, and sit there, to relax. Several restaurants or cafés, most likely office buildings - was this mainly for people who worked here? A few shops, some artwork, modern - all looked very sterile and planned. This part ended with a bridge.

Then there was a narrower part now, but the water widened fast again, to the same extent as before - a barrier in the water. The space, created through the narrowing of the water, created a new plaza. A plaza that also elongated between two housing blocks - but I was on the other side of the water. I could cross the bridge, but I was not interested - it all still looked too artificial. More interesting seemed the again now-wider basin, now with boats on it! Was this not a lake, but a river instead? Or the end of a river, or a part of a river, or the branch of a river? Did the water flow? It did not seem so.

Some boats seemed to be for renting - a special kind of gray boats, on the other side. But most of them were narrow, but long and slender. Some appeared to be housing boats, but I wasn't sure about it. But I had seen such things in British TV shows - crime, especially. And I was nearly alone in this area - okay, it was early in the morning. This would possibly change at lunchtime?

The gap between the houses, at the beginning wide, to form the plaza, was much narrower now. Not so much wider as the water. On the other side, the way along the water seemed to be a promenade, but on my side, it was narrow, and I walked on a kind of wooden jetty. Could it be that I used the wrong side? Was it allowed to walk along this side? I reached a larger pedestrian bridge.

But I also did not cross this bridge, which seemed to be a mistake. The basin bent shortly thereafter, and I could no longer follow it. On the other side? I was not totally sure about it. But it was no dead-end road - a sign on a wall. An arrow pointed in the only direction in which I could walk - Paddington Station / Little Venice. Okay, not much had happened, no problems. If I followed this direction, then it would lead me to Paddington Station. However, what meant "Little Venice"? Little Venice in Los Angeles, this silly artificial US fake of Venetian canals - during the big time of Hollywood even with gondoliers on it? Well, I had only one direction to follow, so I did it.

A short and narrow path between two houses, a bend, and a dirty wall of bricks in front of me, a narrow traversing way. Cobbles, I could turn left or right - it looked like a dirty backyard here. Okay, turning left would obviously bring me back to the station. Better, behind of the wall was obviously the station, the broad way down to the station. Turning right? Little Venice? The houses would end - I could see it - the narrow and ugly path seemed to widen again. I should hit the basin again. What to do? The street that I saw to my left was Praed Street again. There would be the smaller java u. What about a coffee and a snack? I could walk towards Little Venice, whatever it would be, thereafter. I decided to turn left.

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"Hello, Darling!"