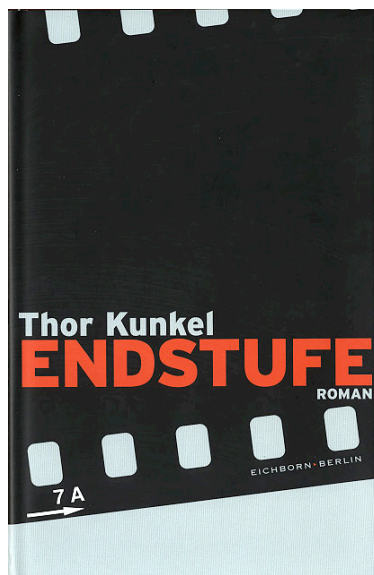


EXTRACT AND SAMPLE-TRANSLATION BY EICHBORN-BERLIN

**NOT FOR SALE**

**Thor Kunkel  
Final Level  
Novel**

*Translated by Tobias Rogner*



»Endstufe«  
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## INTRO

The novel starts with a nightmare: NS-Gynecologist Waldemar Pfister dreams in 1941 of the city of Berlin nowadays. In his eyes the capitol is nothing more than a run-down „marketplace“ inhabited by „loose women and mixed bastards“ . The Prologue sets the tone of the story:

„Humanism will never work out because humans ain't human.“ This insight enables Karl Fußmanns, a young, Frankfort-born chemist and amateur-magnetiser, to join the prestigious SS Hygienic Institute in Berlin. While his *cushy* job (he develops insect repellents) keeps him out of the line of fire, he spends his leisure-time assisting his opium-addicted Superior Count Ferfried Gessner producing blue movies which are smuggled to Libya and traded for commodities with local sheiks. When he falls in love with Lotte, a mysterious *Femme fatale* with non-existing moral standards, his whole life falls apart. In the end Fußmann has to realize that the III. Reich might have been only the soil for a new, even more inhuman society of the 21. century...

Note: When appearing in 2004 Kunkels novel caused a scandal, because the author had mixed facts and fiction in a way, the german press couldn't handle. He mentioned not only the so-called „Sachsenwald-Filme“ - blue movies shot by high-ranking Nazis in 1941 - he also invented a possible story of the filmmakers, based on the results of his research.

## CHAPTER II »Sluggish days«

### Rude awakenings

To burn in light is to live.

- PAUL GURK, 1935

„Your head's on the block too Holsten! Don't you understand?“

That same night, around half-past one, Fußmann sat in Ferrie's office. His meeting with Detsen had shaken him far more than he was willing to admit. „This guy's a blackmailer! And he's being serious! He told me something about a film. A film in which I and Lotte...“

“What, you – and that little slut?“ Holsten put down the water-pipe. “Jolly good, I'd love to see that flick.“

“Look, just stop pretending!“

Fußmann wiped the sweat off his brow. “Why didn't you honestly tell me that you secretly filmed us?“

“I've got no clue what you're talking about.“ Holsten glimpsed at his watch. Ferrie had made him solemnly swear never to confess his deed. “Gosh Fußmann, do you have any idea how late it is?“

“Too late as far as I'm concerned.“ Fußmann giggled as if he had gone mad. “They know everything – about you, about Ferrie and the films of course...“

“Now listen...“ Holsten peeled himself out of his sheets. The receiver in his right seemed to weigh a ton. “I have no idea what you're talking about and that's all I have to say.“

“Who are you protecting? Your old chap Ferrie?“ Fußmann's voice sounded like the hiss of a viper. “This so-called fiancée of Lotte saw your *movie* last week in

Derna – in a bar close behind the African Frontline. So, has the penny dropped now?”

It took Holsten a few seconds. “Hang on a minute, you mean that Ferrie...? Just because he happened to be in Libya? Dear oh dear, you’re completely paranoid.”

“Oh yeah?” Fußmann had had enough. “Alright, so I’ve just been imagining all of this. I’m so sorry to have bothered you! But don’t think that I’ll be risking my head for the two of you. If Detsen get’s in touch with me again I shall provide him with your magnificent address in Berchtesgaden, you can be sure of that!”

“Oh piss off...”

There was a click, he had hung up.

Fußmann, still beside himself with rage, pounded the desk with his fists so that the test tubes shook in their fixtures. He dialled Holsten’s number again, but the line was engaged. *Typical*, he thought. Somehow he did not care about anything anymore after that and spent the night slumped over Ferrie’s desk.

Of course it had to be Böhme who woke him the next morning. He held a cup of instant coffee in his right hand and a croissant in his left.

“Well my friend, one can only live or engage in aetiological research – both at once is quite impossible. Couldn’t you have waited until this morning?”

“I’d forgotten something.” Fußmann stretched his neck.

“You or Ferrie?”, growled Böhme. He slammed the door as he left.

*Something’s up*, thought Fußmann.

The fact that Ferrie had reported sick made things even worse. Böhme conferred with Mrugowsky behind closed doors, and Klaus-Hilde’s grin grew broader every minute.

*Doesn’t look too good*, thought Fußmann. An attempt at reaching Ferrie by telephone yielded an unexpected bit of information: “Count Gessner? No, he doesn’t live here anymore. He gave me notice last month that he would leave.” His landlady had no idea of his new address. But she had a hunch: “He sold most of his furniture. He gave me the impression that he was moving away. Far away.”

Fußmann had other worries. Detsen had to be cut down to size, with or without Ferrie's help. After all, this was about Lotte.

*Know your enemy before meeting him*, he thought. Resch, the friendly porter, had a son in the Sicherheitsdienst and he did a little investigating. Twenty-four hours later, when all the nameplates in the Institute bearing Gothic script were to be replaced by new ones with Antiqua, a brown envelope descended upon his desk: "With best wishes from my son, doctor. The lad's got a bit of a colourful past – you might even say garish."

Fußmann retired to the storeroom. In the dim light of the electronic microscope he read the controversial portrait of his rival on three neatly typed pages. Several authorised signatories of IG Farben thought Rupert Detlevsen was a "typical oil man with bucaneeering ambitions." Other descriptions included "disloyal" and "untrustworthy". In contrast to Ferrie and Holsten, Detsen not only had debts but also an impressive criminal record. Most of this had to do with physical injury: "He may be involved with organised crime."

Detsen was born in Pegnitz, a village in Franconian Switzerland, boasting some 100 inhabitants. He had studied mineralogy and petrology in Zurich and had achieved excellent marks. The prestigious Geotechnical Commission, led by Professor Paul Niggli, predicted that he would embark on a grand career as a cartographer. But Detsen was more a man of action. Already as a student he had regularly taken part in test drilling by the French company *Steinberg-Naptha* in the Ruhr region.

Soon after having gained his degree, Detsen worked in the so-called "Viennese basin" for half a year. He built his first oil derrick in the St Ulrich-Hauskirchen area, but turned down a job with the German Crude Oil Extraction Corp. in Gösting II. He felt that the German-American Petroleum Company in Bremen were a narrow minded bunch and although he had been exchanging letters with Sir Henry Deterding, the president of Royal Dutch Shell, for some time, he rejected a job-offer by Shell in 1931. Instead he flew to Kuwait, where he disappeared in a forest of oil derricks as drilling director of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. That was in

1932 and the brigand chief Ibn Saud had just crowned himself King of Arabia. According to the report, Detsen was working around the clock. At this point in time he thought he could make it overnight.

Years went by and in 1937, when Hitler awarded the chairman of IBM, Thomas J. Watson, a medal for *outstanding services*, Detsen thought of returning home. The third round of drilling near Burgan changed everything: in April '38 his drilling team discovered one of the largest oilfields in the world. Detsen thought he was rich, but his joy was short-lived. The contract he had signed required him to renounce all claims of ownership. Detsen complained to the trade union for oil workers, but without success. He was given a goodbye package of 5000 dollars and a return flight ticket to Berlin. With that, it was all over for him.

Immediately after landing, he reported to War Administration Counsellor Kuckelkorn<sup>1</sup>, head of the military geologists of the Afrika Korps. He had been looking for oil in Libya in agreement with the oil expert Enrico Mattei since 1940. Kuckelkorn put Detsen in charge of a "mineral oil commando". Short interruptions aside, Detsen had been on the African Front ever since.

The report ended there. It did not explain Detsen's relationship to Lotte.

Fußmann locked the documents away in his desk and stepped out into the corridor. All hell was still loose there. Not even a quarter of all the nameplates had been exchanged.

*I wonder if so-called "Gothic" script really is oriental in origin?*

"So what if it is", muttered Fußmann and was given indignant looks.

"I don't think you quite understand what orientalm~~e~~ans", Klaus-Hilde called after him, but Böhme defended Fußmann.

"He understands very well, but I think he's got other problems."

The weekend was near and Ferrie's punctual appearance at work seemed like a farce. He looked *extra relaxed*, even his tan had not lightened on the sickbed. Only the choker collared white shirt didn't quite fit the picture of a countryside summer holidaymaker.

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<sup>1</sup> (1900 – 1973) Military geologist in the Afrika Korps and so-called "water doctor".

"Karl? Did anything unusual happen?"

"Oh yes." Fußmann had waited for this moment since days. "Does the name Rupert Detlevsen ring a bell? Detsen perhaps?"

"Never heard the name before." If Ferrie had been a famous actor, then this would have been one of the great moments of his career. "Should I know the man?"

Fußmann shrugged his shoulders. "He claims to be going out with Lotte..."

"Ohn I see. You rather disapprove of that, don't you?" Ferrie did not seem to be listening. He was leafing through the memos on his desk at high speed.

"Shall I tell you what I disapprove of?" Fußmann's voice went horribly quiet. "Of Detsen seeing a film in which I screw his fiancée in a raised hide – with a view on the Obersalzberg, the Führer's Alpine stronghold. That's what I disapprove of. And of the fact that your cameraman, that walking opium pipe, doesn't even have the decency to admit that he *secretly filmed* us. That's what I disapprove of. And would you like to know what I really disapprove of? What I think is really sickening?"

"Now calm down..." Ferrie hurriedly closed the door.

"My dear friend", he then said in a dazed sounding voice, "if what you're saying is true, then *you* have a big problem."

"No *you* have a big problem", said Fußmann, "Detlevsen wants a hundred thousand marks from you. He called it 'down payment'."

"He's a lunatic." Ferrie kept an eye on the department head's office through the glass window in the door. "May I ask where you met the man? Hang on... the IG Farben summer ball, right?" Ferrie seemed stunned. "Karl, if I'd known." He completed a lap around his desk and stopped in front of the telephone. "D'you know what? I'll have this unpleasant chap arrested. Can you testify that he insulted the Führer in some way? When the Gestapo hears that..."

"They already know." Fußmann made a dismissive gesture. "One of his friends showed me his Gestapo ID."

"Your're kidding..." Ferrie's fingers circled his temples. "Perhaps his ID card was fake."

"What if it isn't?" Fußmann looked as if he was already sitting in the dock. "I'm in deep shit. How can I ever prove that I didn't willingly participate in the making of this film?"

"Karl, don't panic." Ferrie seemed to be considering the risk involved. "In a worst case scenario, which I don't think will ever happen, Holsten would have to stand up for his actions and not you."

"I'd love to agree with you", began Fußmann, "if it wasn't my arse that's in the line of fire. Detsen knows I work here in the Institute. He also seems to be on friendly terms with Gestapo. My life is therefore in danger. You don't want me to lose my nerves, do you?"

Ferrie's face froze to a mask. "Of course not", he said after a while. "But, what can I do for you?"

"Perhaps you can begin by telling me what you really do with the films. They have nothing to do with sexual hygiene – you just made that up."

Ferrie shook his head. "Oh no, originally..."

"THE FACTS, FERRIE! JUST THE FACTS PLEASE!"

"Verywell." Ferrie was clearly struggling to retain his composure. "It was all Holsten's idea."

"WHAT WAS HOLSTENS'S IDEA?" Fußmann was about to go ballistic.

"The exchange deal", said Ferrie. "We exchange the films for iron ore. There's this Swedish count, a wealthy collector and a bit of a sex maniac. Holsten supplies with movies and I try to sell the commodities for a good price."

"You're lying, you're still lying." Fußmann tore at his hair. "Detlevsen saw the movie in Derna. In Libya. How many times were you on the African Front in the last three months? I'm asking you for the last time."

"Let me finish..." Ferrie was silent for a moment. "The collector I'm talking about is not only Swedish, but also the general representative of his country's steel

industry. He's been operating in the interests of Sweden in North Africa for ten years. I met the gentleman only once in Tripolis to discuss some business details.

I don't care what he does with the films."

"Well, well. Does the gentleman have a name?"

Ferrie gnawed his lower lip. "Moltke Oxenius", he then said. "Are you happy now?"

"Not quite." Fußmann still had the impression that Ferrie was playing cat and mouse with him.

"Now then, Karl." Ferrie reached for his wallet. "I understand very well how annoying the whole thing is, but there's no turning back: you're now, how shall I say, part of cinematic history. How about a little compensation? Hm? How about five hundred marks?"

"Let's say one thousand", said Fußmann. "After all, you still owe me a fee."

Ferrie's dark tan turned even darker. "Understand", he said in a low voice. "Detsen isn't the only one to confuse me with the Reichsbank. But, as you wish."

That afternoon Leopold Friesfeld, a somewhat controversial brain researcher at the Frankfurt *Institute for the study of the effects of brain injury*, came round for a visit. His real reason for coming was the development of so-called truth serums that were now being used during the interrogation of spys, and Fußmann had picked up a rumour that the head of the Institute was thinking of creating a *Department for chemically finding the truth*: "There's an international market which we can't ignore. The Gestapo is willing to pay a lot of money for the development of such a drug."

Under normal circumstances Fußmann would have considered the title of Friesfeld's lecture *On logical delirium or truth within the prism of the barbiturates* a provocation, but Artamane "Leo" had been a great admirer of Raumer and Fußmann thus felt obliged to greet the ancient but still healthy man.

"You're Fußmann? Raumer's boy wonder?" Friesfeld was carrying half a brain, preserved in formaldehyde, under his arm. "Oh yes, Kurt, I like to remember him.

It's a pity that in the end he wanted to achieve a *breakthrough by force*. But that was just like him – violence, science, elegance." He coughed and took Fußmann to one side. "Raumer's theory of evolution is our manifesto. The 1000-year Reich will ultimately create a new human being – all jubilant flesh and immaculate health..."

"I'm sorry", Fußmann interrupted, "but Raumer saw the future of man in *non-men*. I have rather a different opinion in this respect."

"Oh really?" Friesfeld's watery eyes seemed to shine. "Is not the aim of all science to overcome man?"

Fußmann shook his head. "That's too grand for me. I'm working toward final victory, that's what's most important right now!"

He did not wait for Friesfeld to rearrange his cue cards and decided instead to head home for the evening.

Obviously he found it difficult to calm down. A nude phantom of his beloved brought him off course.

It was at some traffic lights that he discovered her walking amongst the pedestrians. Stark naked as she was, she just seemed to be going for a stroll. Her firm, full moon gently swayed through the crowd, but – as always – nobody apart from Fußmann seemed to take any notice of the apparition.

*People in the nude, the future's looking lewd.* At the foot of an escalator she turned around once more and blew him a kiss over her shoulder. *Karl, darling, don't forget me.*

*Love is not a causal occurrence,* thought Fußmann as he roamed around the *Kaufhaus des Westens* just before closing time. As so often before, he hoped that she – Lotte – would just accidentally bump into him. According to the *Berliner Zeitung* the *KaDeWe* department store was still the place to meet for "cheap bankers' sweethearts and lazy cocottes", who brunched here and then tried on new costumes. He loitered indecisively in front of the changing rooms for a while until a store detective gruffly saw him off the premises.

His bad look followed him to Friedrichstraße – best place in Berlin to pick up whores on the beat – either. He only noticed smalltime punters and informers of the vice squad dressed up as trannies getting in each other's way in front of restaurants. There was a flower girl with grey hair – but no other female in sight.

Aimlessly he drifted past brightly lit cafés and shop windows. The “Dash for the doublet” was as yet nowhere to be seen and dummies stood clothed for the new season, wearing dotted culottes and misshapen, rubberised hooded coats that no seafaring man would have worn before 1939. The latest fad had come from Paris of course. Recently Jeanne Lavin had stunned the fashion world with her satin-covered gas masks and now they were on show here on the Hausvogteiplatz in a very posh display window. In three trendy colours and “with an extra protective carbon filter against mustard gas” - so it said in neat handwriting.

*Particularly tailors profit from war*, Fußmann thought. These ridiculous accessories also happened to confirm his suspicion that it was impossible to turn city girls like Johanna into down-to-earth lasses.

Night had fallen and he crept along shivering beneath neon signs – Osram, Odol, Radeberger and Allianz insurances lit his way to the Stettin railway station. Here too there were a few last bastions for languishing *bon viveurs*.

The area was known as a playground for riff-raff: spill over from local gay bars, made up negroes, lunatics, morphine addicts and students of duelling fraternities, always looking for trouble or an easy hit.

*Twāridescent creatures*, both a revolting cross between a rent boy and a murderous thief, had noticed Fußmann and followed him all the way to Tauentzienstraße. It was only his uniform that kept them at a distance and Fußmann was glad when a taxi stopped next to him.

“Taxi, sir?”

“You’ve been sent by God”, he mumbled and dropped onto the backseat.

For the first time he sensed that his search for Lotte could become dangerous.

Despite or perhaps because of this he still hoped that a miracle would happen.

## 11. Cobalt

He found out one day in the Stern Café on Postdamer Platz, now much frequented by the bigwigs of the Institute for Applied Science. The circumstances were a little odd, since Böhme had invited groups 5a to 9c to his sixtieth birthday and had ordered them to “party ‘til you drop”.

“Let’s have fun!”, he yelled at them at the entrance. Knowing his lads, he had brought along a pile of cheap joke articles: cone-shaped hats looking like megaphones and red clown’s noses, which he had inscribed with atomic numbers from the periodic system.

“There you go Fußmann, you little would-be magnetiser – I’ve reserved 12 Mg for you.” He himself dashed about as 1H – hydrogen – and tried building “bridges” between enemy elements: “Now pull yourself together sulphur dear, getting together with your colleague nitrogen isn’t going to do you any harm.”

*What an explosive mix*, thought Fußmann, who knew how much many of his colleagues hated each other. He assumed that the birthday boy was paying the drinks and ordered an almond milk-sake-cocktail called an ice-breaker, which, according to the menu, would even calm bloodthirsty samurais. This rot-gut did indeed put him in a more mellow mood. He even laughed when Klaus-Hilde alias copper told bad jokes.

“Which is the most quiet city in the world? Paris of course. They’ve put the German word for silence up on every street corner: *Ru-e*.”

“I don’t understand”, complained the walrus standing next to Fußmann. “And you my boy?”

He shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t care.”

The fat bloke looked peeved and twirled his moustache.

“Speaking as a virologist, I’d say you’re incubating something...”

He was called Liebig – “just like Justus”, he added – and fussed about his place in Böhme’s periodic system: “Sod cobalt. I’d rather be lithium. Good for potency.”

Liebig’s marriage had broken up over a packet of condoms, which his wife had discovered in his briefcase amongst sandwiches and paperwork. As their last act of sexual union had been performed some ten years previously, she was quick to file a petition for divorce. Liebig had tried explaining everything to the lawyer: as a regular visitor to the “Tivoli” he had simply tried putting together an “innocent dance act à la Tillergirls”. This, he felt, was reason enough to get off with a different one of these prancing damsels every night, because “the girls will only dance if they trust you”. The judge held a somewhat different opinion, found him to be guilty and Liebig was divorced. Despite this he still had not given up his dream of staging his own show. “Forbearance is not acquittance” he would say, and: “the pigskins are storable for over five years.” He was convinced that the use-by date of the rubbers, April 1945, would also bring the end of the war. The winner was as yet undetermined: “It doesn’t say on the packet.”

When a paperboy dropped by, Liebig bought a newspaper.

“Here’s some news from Cyrenaica, gentlemen. Our tanks are pushing the Tommies into the Mediterranean Sea. It’s party time!” He nudged Fußmann. “All this just because the Italians proved completely incompetent in Africa. In my opinion they’d never have dared to go if they hadn’t won the football world championship in ’34. That sort of thing makes people cocky.”

“And now we have to sort their shit out for them”, muttered Chrom.

“You won’t here me complaining”, said Klaus-Hilde. “It’s just a question of time until a malaria epidemic breaks out over there. Our prophylaxes will be needed at last.”

“So we all have some use in the end”, sniggered Liebig.

“Now don’t get cheeky: our applied research is giving Rommel a strategic advantage in North Africa.”

“Blah, blah, blah.” Liebig poked Fußmann in the ribs. “Hey you, magnesium – wasn’t your world famous boss here a moment ago?”

"I'm sorry?" Fußmann had been dreaming of Lotte again with eyes wide open. "You work with Ferrie Gessner, don't you?"

"That's right." The nude phantom had disappeared. "He was down in the test area."

Liebig smiled to himself. "Having trouble with the girls, are we?"

"Why d'you say that?"

"Experience. Between us, you look troubled."

"That's the understatement of the week", said Fußmann.

"Shall I tell you what the problem is?" Liebig undid the top button on his shirt. "You aren't the right age." Grinning he added: "Look at me. Bald, beer belly, short-sighted – but *sturdy footwear*." He awkwardly put one leg up on the table. "What does that say to an eighteen-year-old bitch?"

Fußmann shrugged his shoulders. "That you can kick hard?"

"No, that one no longer regards love as a right, but rather a charity. And that one is thankful, awfully thankful, for every stupid little pussy that isn't too proud to accept money. Of course things have always been that way, obviously love is an exchange deal: sex in return for the provision of supplies, and most women waste no time in turning their husbands into *household fools* as the Arabs say. An old fool has certain advantages."

Hydrogen-Böhme had quietly joined them. He cleared his throat: "I don't always share your opinions Liebig, but you're right there: most women want a man others wouldn't have even if he was given to them as a present. A woman once told me that on my aluminium wedding anniversary." He raised his glass to himself in the mirror. "To us, the great German twits!"

"You should be happy, at least your old lady is honest", sighed Liebig. "Marriage is only the second best way of living together with a woman." "What's the best?", Fußmann wanted to know. "A *steady relationship with a prostitute*." Liebig's observation was followed by pious silence. "Weininger once wrote that. Men with brains have always only loved prostitutes. Sterile women."

Fußmann smiled innocently, as he always did when he *understood exactly* what had been said. Despite the sake-almond milk brew he was still conscious enough to concentrate on getting the fat bloke to say more. He seemed to be quite besotted with the chap sitting next to him. Their conversation appeared to be getting a little private and he was nudging him. He was saying something about the city's "crumbling meat market".

"Well my boy, you should have come earlier! There was a wide selection on offer here about five years ago. The Nazis wrecked all the fun when they brought politics into our nightlife. Of course there are still a few top brothels around – the good old *Chain Reaction* for instance, run by a fifty-year old wench who used to oil up old Hindenburg's machinery. Then there's the *Plumtree* – a classic officer's whorehouse. I don't know whether the *Red Mill* still exists. Lefties used to go there to screw nationalist whores and have a chat. Oh yes, the *House of the Movement* apparently still has style, but the new administrators are from the SA and they don't even let the Reichsmarschall in."

"Who?" Fußmann had kept his ears pricked up all the time. "Well of course, don't think they're all saints. Heydrich's a right old punter. And Göring has this thing with cigars. Apparently he only smokes Honduran cigars previously inserted into a woman's... you get the idea. He often goes to a small officer's brothel in Berlin, where people still know him from his flying days. Not exactly upper class, so people say, but cosy. Fatty probably has an account there. He's always short of money because of his lifestyle."

"You know by any chance where Conte Ciano... ?", Fußmann asked with deliberate nonchalance.

"Why – d'you want to fuck him?"

Everyone around the table laughed loudly, but Fußmann grinned and bore it. "No, but I once heard that he was a regular visitor to a posh brothel."

"Well, well, so you heard..."

"Yes, somebody from the Dengue fever department said so in the canteen."

"And that's where you want to go. A place frequented by a dago?" Liebig laughed dirtily. "If there's a den of vice where all the diplomatic rabble like to go, it's the Harem."

"The Harem?"

"Germanic Harem", said Liebig. "Less than ten minutes walk from here."

He blew three smoke rings into the air. "The girls there aren't exactly cheap, but they're premium quality."

"How do you mean?"

"It's a classy place." Liebig ordered another sherry. "Most of them would have deserved a first-class fuck medal. Alone the chamber maids' ballet - my word..." He moved even closer to Fußmann. "All the popies wear bonnets with ribbons and edging, just like in the good old days of Kaiser Wilhelm. They also have pretty little aprons tied above their bottoms with a bow! And they're all nicely shaven downstairs. When they dance the aprons bob up and down, a bit like this" - he moved his hand as if giving a Hitler salute. "Of course that's all rather harmless in comparison with the torpedo-gâteau-number or the popgun-tango." He watched Fußmann's innocent-looking face. "You're interested in women of easy virtue are you? Well, that's not the worst thing a chemist can get interested in. As long as he keeps an eye on the gonococci."

"This is the vice squad speaking." Böhme-hydrogen had turned his cone-shaped hat into a megaphone. "The boy's engaged. To a very nice lady." He sounded like an intervening father.

"Well, he can stay engaged", chuckled Liebig. "He swore to be eternally faithful, but not eternally blind, isn't that right my boy?"

"Hear, hear", agreed some of the others around the table.

Liebig shoved a cigar between Fußmann's lips and lit it for him. "You seem determined my boy, but I'd think very carefully about the whole thing. Once you get started with whores, something funny happens in the brain - you understand what I mean? Over time it all get's terribly expensive."

## Surveying Lotteland

1.

I would never visit a brothel any  
other way than alone and solemn.

Louis Aragon

The Germanic Harem, located in a quiet side-street adjacent to the Kurfürstendamm, was one of the best brothels in town, despite an almost invisible entrance next to the Neumann laundry. "Come for a charming tête-à-tête in elegant surroundings" it said on the establishment's visiting card. A Jugendstil elevator with wood panelling took gentlemen to the third floor.

As the elevator door closed behind him, Fußmann had a bunch of yellow roses in his hand and a plan in his head. He wanted to convince Lotte of his love, and together, he hoped, they would find a way out of this sink of iniquity.

He was painfully aware of the confines of his financial situation. The watchdog wore tails and a bowler hat, resembled a gravedigger from the Wild West and demanded a "fuck fee" of 300 Reichsmarks – Fußmann's monthly salary – right away.

"Hang on a minute..."

Alfons Klose's simple eyes looked Fußmann over with the smug disrespect of an old pimp. He was from Pankow and had last managed the *Sports Club Ever Loyal*, where the presence of both women and dogs was frowned upon. He was still an honorary member of the *Apache Blood Hiker's Club* and the *German Oak Lodge*, which held its annual plenary assembly in the Stern Café on Potsdamer Platz.

"Never seen you here before."

"Nor me you." Remarking that his little joke was not well received, he added: "Allow me to introduce myself: Fußmann. Karl Fußmann."

Klose's facial expression displayed indifference. "You're from Hessen, are you?"

Fußmann nodded.

"You don't happen to be related to Carl Grossmann?" He meant the peddler and serial killer, who had gone on a killing spree around the Silesian railway station a couple of years ago.

"Listen." Fußmann loosened his tie. "I paid, didn't I?"

"That doesn't mean that I'm going to let you in." Klose rocked up and down. "One more stupid comment and I'll knock the living daylight out of you..." It was obvious that he could hit hard. "May I look into your bag? You don't happen to have a small knife hidden somewhere in there?"

Fußmann sighed, but had to let him see what he had brought along, just to be on the safe side: a bottle of mouth wash, a clean pair of underpants, a shaving kit. The Rogo stockings and the Chanel perfume were for her.

"Nothing wrong with a few sacrificial offerings", said Klose. "But can you identify yourself?"

Fußmann could.

"Well, well. SS-Hygiene Institute." Klose returned the ID card. "How did you get our address?"

Fußmann swallowed hard. "Well, I'm acquainted with... Conte Ciano... and..." "The Conte? You're a friend of the Conte? Why didn't you say that straight away?" The bouncer adjusted his hat. "Do you know our stud book? Or d'you already have a particular lady in mind?"

"I'd like to see Lotte", mumbled Fußmann. "Lolotte..."

"I know who you mean." Klose leafed through the book. "At last, the close season is over", he then said. "It's about time the young lady was taken for a ride. She goes to drama school three times a week - cloud-cuckoo-land if you ask me. A

whore needs a bit of polishing every day, but no – our prima donna only trains with sausages.” He studied Fußmann. “What difference does it make whether they’re from Vienna or Frankfurt?”

“Now don’t get cheeky”, stuttered Fußmann, but Klose had already pushed him through a double-winged swinging door. “Straight on to the Gentleman’s Bar. There’s a staircase at the back to the right. Room number 9. I wish you pleasant intercourse. Hey, you – attention, Herr Oberwaffenscheiße!”

Fußmann is in a trance: the black runner soaks up all sound. Nowhere a ray of daylight, electric bronze lights tickle the optic nerves and bathe everything in the same glow. He feels as if hovering “above the darkened flies of madness” (as he noted in his diary on 18th October). He seems to be sinking, the length of the corridor deepens, he feels tempted to get out his pendulum – as a plumb line.

*I feel your sting, hell*, thinks Fußmann and he walks a little faster. From the corner of his eye he sees images as if high on opium – exotic miniatures with flashing lights, golden garlands and columns, mirrors with ornate frames, wrought-iron olive branches and vineleaves, shimmering fabrics boasting magnificent drapery, ceilings on which dionysian creatures romp about in a trompe-l’œil sky. Two red lamps, whose bases form the shapes of nymphs being carried off by fauns, gleam like light buoys before a coast at night. The place is filled with an air of sensuous opulence only to be found in the Orient.

In the Stern Café Liebig had made the brothel’s mysterious madame responsible for this: apparently she was an Armenian princess who had been abducted by the Turks and had escaped a sheikh’s harem with the little help of a specially sharpened needle. The First World War had only just ended when she set up a posh brothel in Paris and then went on to supply aristocratic clients with hand-picked *flowers* from her native country for some ten years. Even the Prince of Wales, known to be a discriminating and finicky visitor to brothels, had had nothing to complain about. Two years ago a Prussian prince had then laid the foundation stone for Madame’s Berlin branch; he arranged the Reichsbank’s loan

and the written consent of the sponsors that possible insolvencies could be compensated with "natural produce".

Madame now housed a dozen Aryan dolls". Two French girls and a Creole bird completed her assortment. Madame herself had risen to become a patroness of the fine arts, and her girls' performances in the Red Salon had even attracted the distinguished painter Adolf Ziegler, the "master of the German pubic hair". The weekly "chamber maids' ballet" proved to be ever popular despite war and political tensions.

In the "Gentleman's Bar" – the name was written on a large enamel sign fixed to the facing wall – Fußmann regained consciousness. It was a baroque hall of mirrors with stucco, chandeliers and wine-red armchairs. There was a poster above the fireplace advertising perversely high-heeled shoes. It read: "Only real pretzel stick heels will stop all autonomy and any attempt to escape."

Three men were leaning against the bar – two uniforms and a silk dressing gown. The trio was reminiscent of a drawing by George Grosz – a neck like a bull, a monocle and a saddlenose. They ignored Fußmann, only the barman nodded at him.

"With all respect, Conte, Hitler didn't have any other choice." The saddlenose was in the midst of holding a lecture. "You can't reproach a statesman for representing his country's interests. What's the war in the east all about? It's about crude oil in the Caucasus. If we don't secure at least a fraction of the raw materials for ourselves, we'll be at the mercy of the British in a few years."

"Still, it wouldn't have been necessary to occupy half of Europe."

"Come on, the British occupied half the world. Just look at Egypt, the Tommies have been down there for over sixty years now. Apparently they have to secure the sea route to India – that's the official explanation. Well, our people need living space in the east."

"Excuse me", Fußmann cleared his throat. "I'm looking for a staircase..."

"Staircase?" The bull's neck slowly turned around toward him.

Although Fußmann had never seen Conte Ciano before, he had an idea of who stood before him.

"Yellow roses", said the Conte. "Let me guess – you're an attaché, right?"

"Hygienist."

The Conte looked shocked. "Is someone ill? I mean, a girl?"

Fußmann shook his head.

"Where is it that you wish to go?" asked the monocle. His grin was as spooky as agnathia.

"Room number 9", said Fußmann.

"Oh, the eye of a needle."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Fußmann studied the chubby dial.

"Well." The Conte was looking for words with his ring-laden hands. "Our dearest has just had a little operation." Whispering he added: "Some say that the surgeon put in one stitch too many."

"Surgeon?" Fußmann froze. "Is it something serious?"

The trio at the bar exchanged sly glances.

"You really don't know!" The Conte threw up his hands. "This operation is very popular nowadays, especially with ladies of the night. Only a few stitches you understand, just like after difficult labour. To tighten the entrance."

"Let me give you a good bit of advice", added the saddlenose. "In future ask for Ditte-Marie. Prime beef and no pussy that'll pinch you."

"Don't listen to him", the Conte interfered. "Ditte's a little goose."

Fußmann had more than enough. "Please – where's the stairway?"

The Conte pointed to a purple curtain, when a woman's voice shrieked across the bar. Fußmann had to turn – and as he turned his head he saw a black woman, stark naked apart from two garters and something around her hips that looked like woven air, storm into the room. She was holding a court shoe in her right hand and a broken off heel in her left.

"Blanche, you sweet bit of chocolate." The Conte put his arms around her. "What's bothering you?"

‘Look’, she whined, ‘Wenzel broke off my heel! The senile ram will only do it standing up!’

The monocle laughed loudly. ‘A dangerous position indeed. Thank heavens it’s only a pair of shoes.’

‘My favourite shoes!’ wailed the Creole girl. ‘And they were expensive. God, I feel the weight of the entire brothel on my shoulders.’

‘Then get Wenzel to buy you a new pair’, the barman appeased her.

‘I don’t want a new pair, I want *these!*’

The saddlenose nudged Fußmann chummily. ‘The flatbackers in this house can become quite bossy. You’d think a posh brothel has little in common with a shoe shop – but, wrong. Watch out, man!’ He ducked, just managing to avoid being hit by the hurtling shoe.

Fußmann turned to walk away.

‘One moment please...’ The barman cleared his throat as if he was a little embarrassed. ‘If I may be so bold as to say, sir: cleanliness is of the utmost importance in this house. In Britain we like to use the term *safe sex.*’

He showed Fußmann an impressive assortment of brand condoms. ‘Voilà.’

*From one Hygiene Institute to the next*, thought Fußmann and chose the vulcanised Fromms rubber.

‘Excellent choice, sir, brand article. The favourite brand of the *Cabinet d’Aieta...* and the Japanese ambassador.’

## 2.

Women can be fixed just like curtains;  
with nails and a hammer.

- Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly

Fußmann's confidence had been disturbed, but not destroyed. He secretly hoped that Lotte was here against her own free will and that the story about the sausages was a clear indication that she had refused all physical intimacy. He left the stairs behind him: he strode through a kaleidoscope built of red bulls'-eye panes past gas lamps and padded doors. The walls were hung with framed Japanese *Shungas* and steel engravings reminiscent of scenes from Chorier's *Satyra Sotadica*, between them hung huge canvases on which an able craftsman had immortalised the women of the house as Greek temple whores.

Room number 9 was at the far end of the corridor. There was a gleaming enamel sign on the door. Above the silhouette of a servant girl bending over to wipe the floor it said "Wet and willing".

*Humour*, thought Fußmann and gripped his yellow roses. As with the other doors the key was stuck on the outside: Fußmann turned the porcelan knob and was surprised at how quietly the door opened. So *this is where you live*. Fur blankets on the walls was the first thing he saw.

He prowled undecidedly around the rumpled bed and glanced up at the canopy covered with mirrors. He felt tiny next to the red cushions embroidered with gold lillies. On the other hand, he felt that this high altar of lust would dwarf even the largest of the *Chabonais'* playgrounds. The hooks and chains fixed to the pillars looked intimidating, but it was not until his eyes caught sight of the dildo collection on the bedside table that he briefly thought of leaving again. He also found a casket containing coke and a photo of the black magician Crowley, fat, tanned

and dressed like a sheikh. Underneath it said: *Satanas Te Trahat in Amorem mei – May the devil lure you into loving me.*

In front of the fireplace, in which a coal fire flickered, lay the remains of another great animal – a bearskin rug with a preserved head. Yellow glass eyes stared indifferently into the world above a wide open mouth. *I'm the relief guard*, thought Fußmann. He could see himself as a bedside rug, sporting steel-rimmed glasses, fingerstalls that fold back and blond bumfluff.

The sound of quietly splashing water brought him back to reality. He looked around and noticed a second door. The colour of naked skin gleamed through a slit not even the width of a hand.

*The full moon is about to rise*, thought Fußmann. This time it was no nude phantom, but the original, and the sight took his breath away.

Lotte stood with her back to him, her leg bent just like the blonde vestal virgin's in Makart's *Taste*, a painting that every school boy knew from post card reproductions. There were certain differences however: as Lotte washed, there was a flash in her crotch, gold Sig runes danced above a sponge whose pores spewed milky foam. *Oh, my beloved Lotteland.*

Her body was reflected, in halves and thirds, in the mirrors covering the doors of a toilet, producing a salad of naked curves out of which his eye found no escape. Particularly the firm shining full moon seemed to be showing Fußmann every lunar phase imaginable.

Fußmann hardly took any notice of the rest of the bathroom: the bathtub made of green Issorie marble, the goldleaf intarsia between the mirrors, the friezes boasting priapic motifs running along the wall beneath the ceiling.

*Look at me*, thought Fußmann, the magnetiser. *Now.*

Their eyes met in the mirror.

Then she turned around with a disbelieving expression on her face.

"Velvet eyes." She dropped the sponge and grabbed Fußmann by the lapel of his jacket.

"Lotte, I..."

Her lips sealed his mouth.

"How did you find me?", she asked after having caught her breath.

"No magnet would ever ask a bit of iron that question."

"I'm asking anyway."

"Secret weapons", sighed Fußmann.

"Oh, that's so like you..." Only now did she seem to have noticed the roses and started back as if she'd pricked herself. "You're mad." She rubbed her underarm.

"No, in love", said Fußmann and was surprised at his snappy answer.

A tellurian feeling had spread all over his chest for some time now – like cold rock being warmed near lava.

"Oh, we're in love are we?" echoed Lotte. Lotte's reflections smiled mockingly. "Why didn't you leave things as they were?"

"How were *things*?" Fußmann sat down on a bathroom stool.

She did not reply and took a dive in the roses.

"Did you have to pay?", she asked quietly.

"No, the porter said something about an open day. Since I could identify myself as an SS man he let me in for free. The chap said I could pick a chick." He could see from her face that he had gone too far. "Of course I paid."

She shook her head. "You'll get your money back later." Her face turned serious. "Why did you come?"

"I wanted to see you again." His voice seemed to be coming out of his suprasternal notch. "Talk."

Lotte nodded. "You're angry with me about the film, right?"

"You knew about it?"

"Even if I did?" She was sliding about on the side of the bathtub. "Oh Karl, if I'd asked you to... well, do what we'd have done anyway, then you wouldn't have played along. Be honest."

"I'm not as boring as you think I am."

"know", she said quietly. Her hand disappeared in the foam to look for a washing utensil. "Why don't you join me for a bath?"

*Why not?* Fußmann did not hang around. He took off his clothes, apart from his gloves, and stepped into the warm water which smelt of nards and poppies.

A gramophone stood next to the bathtub and Lotte had already put on a record. After a swinging opening, the bored voice of a chansonnier sang accompanied by sporadic piano playing.

*I've not the dreary but romantic gaze of carp  
the gaze of pike 'fore snapping at the barb  
I've not got vaseline upon my lens  
to turn spiked helmets into alabaster brows...*

"I think you're a little out of practice, my dear." Lotte sat in the bathtub too now and teased him with her feet. "Right?"

*Right*, thought Fußmann. He was having trouble opening the champagne bottle. *Some party while others work...*

When the bang finally came, she caught the foaming jet in two crystal goblets. "Here's to love."

Silver light reflections darted across their faces.

*Sex machines*, thought Fußmann, *and why not?* Lotte's nudity was like a lubricant for him: his gaze repeatedly slipped onto her breasts and – as if there was an ocular force of gravity – then plummeted further down. *A fleeting paradise would do me fine*, thought Fußmann.

The lips of her vulva were clearly visible, and he thought he could make out a similarity with a *horseshoe magnet*.

"Need something to lift your spirits?" She offered him a jar filled with sweets. The small lumps reminded Fußmann of glazed dates. "Turkish opium sweets", said Lotte. "Madame has them flown in. They're excellent against soar throat. And they work as a disinfectant."

"Really?" Fußmann's tongue instantly tasted myrrh with a touch of fresh mint. The bitterness of the poppy juice was subtly hidden by these aromas, a taste which

the young Picasso had described as “*the least stupid of all the world’s tastes*”.  
 “Uh, Lotte”, he began again. “I...”

“Not now.” She showered him with champagne. “Is that unpleasant?”

*Pleasantly unpleasant*”, whispered Fußmann. The foam caused a prickling sensation on his scalp and gave him a long overdue erection.

“Atlast.” Lotte took Fußmann’s glasses off for him. “And now for the *pleasant* part.” She swapped her enamel seat for his face. “Sieg Geil<sup>2</sup>, darling!”, she said giggling.

Fußmann used his tongue like a shoehorn. On feeling something hard he started back: three cross stitches sewn with surgical thread. “Why...”

“It’s part of the deal, I’m afraid”, she said.

“What deal?”

“My job.”

“Are you being serious?”

“Look, Karl.” Lotte got up. “What’s so terrible about a little cosmetic surgery? Frau Goebbels wanted the same operation after her fifth child. In this job my pussy not only has to be regularly checked but also adjusted from time to time. Now do you want to use a rubber or not?”

### 3.

And because of the fact that these demons contain water,  
 they are especially horny.

L. M. Sinistrari d’Ameno

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<sup>2</sup> Pun on the triumphant “Sieg Heil” (hail victory), “Geil” meaning horny.

They were dripping wet as they fell onto the bearskin rug. Fußmann thought he saw the bear roll his eyes. Lotte supported herself with both hands and rotated, her face turned away from him, on his glans. The surgeon had done an excellent job, since it was only possible to enter a millimetre at a time. Finally – *coup d'art* – she lifted her feet off the floor and balanced herself freely for a moment on Cupid's swollen arrow. Fußmann felt like peeled asparagus.

"Communicatingvessels", he groaned - a geophysical idiom that had always made him randy. "I suppose overflow isn't allowed, is it?" He thought he could imagine what the rising pressure of a hydraulic press must feel like.

"Don't be silly", said Lotte. She was working over him like a ship's screw.

*Rather sad, thought Fußmann. Experiencing another person's entrails as the highest form of pleasure. I should complain to my maker for having programmed me this way.*

Perhaps what he saw was the product of being high on opium for the first time, a sort of *Meraviglia* experience, something Cocteau had known too: "It's difficult to take the world seriously anymore after having taken opium."

The anamorphic image of his longitudinal beam inside her meat tunnel reminded him of the entrance to a sausage-filling machine. As a schoolboy he had once seen how meat was stuffed into a skin and then seconds later would have turned into an Upper Hessian *Blutwurst*.

"The bouncer'sright", he said giggling, "who care's whether you train with a sausage or with me?"

"You're about to find out", she moaned. Her abdomen twitched on his flagpole. "Oh Karl, that's... Oh yes... yes... You've healed me..."

Perhaps she had come for the first time in her life, her eyes filled with tears and she gently kissed him.

Half past six, it was drizzling. Fußmann cooled his head by leaning against the window. The trickling water on the other side of the glass drew corals of light bustling about onto his face.

"Don't say you're sorry already", said Lotte. She sat on the bidet and sniffed coke off her powder mirror. Fußmann could hear the tap of the Bombilha tube on the glass. "Do you want some as well, darling? A little noseful hasn't done anybody any harm."

Fußmann shook his head. "Do you really work here... in this...?" "Brothel?" She threw back her curls with an innocent smile. "Oh dear, velvet eyes, what silly questions you do ask. This place isn't what you think it is you know, in fact it's a finishing school. We all just pretend it's a brothel so we don't get bored."

She was lying stretched out on the bed, a great white snake in a furry den. Obviously she had not had enough yet, as she was piling more coke onto the mirror.

"What about Detsen? I suppose he doesn't mind all this."

"What's Detsen got to do with it? I'm free to do what I want."

"You call this being free?"

She said nothing for a while as she scraped the white crystals into place. "You don't understand", she then said.

"I understand very well", said Fußmann. "You need the money, right?"

"Exactly." Her eyes stared at him from the mirror. "Money still rules the world, right?"

"But you can't carry on like this. It's awful."

"You thought differently ten minutes ago." She sniffed a couple of times. "Do you really want to know what's awful? Not being able to make ends meet. Standing at a cash desk all day or doing the washing for some upper class gits for a few quid. Because otherwise you can't pay the rent or get yourself a lukewarm bowl of soup. *That's* awful. The average woman in the street has to work a whole a month to earn what I get paid here in a single day."

"Bad comparison."

"Oh yeah?" She seemed amused. "Why do you say that? The lower classes all have to sell their arse, that's the way the world is. You're no exception. You can see what you're worth on your pay slip."

She stretched between the cushions. "Money is unscrupulous, Karly. And amoral. You've got to be shameless to rule over money."

She leaned back and spread her legs.

"Look." The lips of her vulva opened like the long-nose pliers of a surgeon specialised in lobotomy. "Do you know what I really do, sweetie? Hm? I show money what it is: a load of filth which trickles out of me and which I piss on if I feel like it." She laughed and stroked her cleanly shaven mound. "Either you fuck money or money fucks you. I'm nastier than the nastiest bit of pelf, and yet party bigwigs, big landowners, bankers forget about their faith when they see this. They sacrifice Mammon for this..."

Fußmann turned back towards the window with a jerk. The corals of light no longer bustled about. Only his brow seemed to be covered by phosphorescent bacteria. "By the way, who's Pfister?" he asked quietly.

"Pfister?" From the corner of his eye he could see how she sat up. "How come you know Waldemar Pfister?"

"I don't. You gave me his telephone number - in Berchtesgaden, don't you remember?"

"Really? I must have made a mistake. He's my gynaecologist." She frowned. "What is this turning into? An interrogation?"

"No, I'm just acting the worried boyfriend, that's all." Fußmann looked at her. "Are you really free to do what you want? I mean, do they let you get out of here?"

"You mean, do I go shopping? Why should I? I just have to snap my fingers."

"I meant something different." Fußmann seemed unusually decided. "I want you to pack your things - right now."

"Right now?" Lotte put the mirror with the coke down on the bedside table. She stood up and gently swayed to a beat only she could hear.

"Don't say you want to save me. How romantic of you. Your boss was absolutely right."

"Ferrie?"

"Hm, hm." She let herself fall onto the bed, making the bedsprings squeak. "Ferrie Gessner phoned me a few weeks ago. He said you'd turn up here one day and act the hero."

She seemed to have noticed his disbelieving face, since she sat up. "Oh Karl, don't be angry. I think it's very sweet of you. Let me thank you on my hands and knees..."

She squatted before him and reached for his member.

"Hands off!" Fußmann pushed her to the ground. "You can't stay here. Don't you understand? This is a whorehouse!"

"Yes, yes, I'm not deaf." Her lips swam in the darkness.

"You're going to move out of here. Do you understand?"

"And where will I go then? To your place, perhaps?"

"Why not?"

Lotte walked into the bathroom. When she reappeared, she waved the half full bottle of champagne. "Alright. And then?"

"We'll get married."

She nodded, offered him the bottle and when he did not react, she got back into bed. "Carry on."

"We'll move to the countryside... I'll find a new job. ~~The~~ *Only-Blonde-Laboratories* are always looking for qualified people." He stroked her hand. "We'll get by somehow, what do you think, darling?"

Her not saying anything for a while felt like the mocking grin of a mole lying between the sheets, then she took one deep breath. "Karl, can we talk like grown-ups? I'm not being kept a prisoner here. I earn good money."

"You've already said that."

"So, I'm saying it again. Apart from that", she swallowed hard, "I'm engaged to Detsen."

"Well, of course that changes everything." Fußmann gathered his clothes. "And what about *magnetic love*? Why did you start waffling on about all that when you don't even believe any of it yourself. You lied to me."

"No I didn't. Sex with you is fantastic, but we're not suited to each other otherwise."

"But that pimp's suited to you, is he?" Fußmann could not control himself any longer. "Are you acting the *high-class tart* in the Germanic Harem because of him? Princess Trullala?"

"That's enough, Karl." Being a National Socialist, there were two things Lotte hated: class snobbery and intellectual elitism. "Detsen may not be a genius, but he knows a lot about oil. He was ripped off a couple of years ago, otherwise he'd be a millionaire now."

"If he turns more girls like you into whores, it wouldn't be surprising." Fußmann struggled to get his high boots on. "That rotten, little bast..."

"Shut up!" She became so angry that she started swinging the champagne bottle like a cudgel.

"God", she then sobbed, "how can you be so petty bourgeois!"

"We belong together." Fußmann gently put his arms around her.

"Do you think I don't know that?" She turned away and stepped up to the window. The corals of light bustled about her shoulders.

"I have strange dreams since meeting you. Something's happening to me and it frightens me." It sounded as if the words were getting stuck in her throat. "Please Karl, give me some... time."

"As much as you like." The sight of her full moon appeased him. He glanced at his yellow roses, which had withered overnight, one last time. "Next time I'll bring a vase."

"Next time?"

"Won't you let me see you again?"

Lotte shrugged her shoulders. "Why do you want to torture yourself pointlessly?"

"Yes or no?"

She nodded sadly. "You know the price, Karl."

## 4.

Those not in love can not understand how  
an intelligent man can suffer because of a woman.  
That is like being surprised at somebody dying of  
cholera because of so insignificant a creature  
as the comma bacillus.

Marcel Proust

Fußmann had turned into a brothel addict faster than expected. *Most men would never admit it, he sometimes thought, but only the female sex is a worthy reward for a poor devil's hard earned money. Everything else is a lie.* Perhaps it was also Madame's opium sweets that lured him as if they were the food of the gods. He spent every weekend in the Harem. Klose greeted him like a regular visitor now and Lotte had even got used to his nose clip.

"Why do you wear that silly *pince-nez*?"

"Because I'd suffocate otherwise. It isn't one anyway."

She hated the way he split hairs, but was always regarded as "reserved" for him. She even dropped out of the "chamber maid's ballet". She wouldn't keep quiet either, and let the whole house hear how well she was being screwed. Afterwards she would stare at him, as if trying to penetrate an invisible veil before his eyes.

"You're not just some cool shagging partner, Karl, you put your heart into it..."

*Please recognise me, Fußmann would think then. You're the milky edge to my night. I love you. Really.*

At the beginning of October, as the Army Group Centre was heading for Moscow, they had exercised their way through "Pee Bee" Randolph's classic *Magia Sexualis* together. Fußmann, intoxicated by the poppy, used his pendulum to discover ecstatic vibrations above her mons veneris. Carraci's copperplate

engraving had become a reality, the satyr's exploring penis circled above the vulva of his maliciously smiling nymph...

Fußmann had replaced the string of his pendulum with a long, almost invisible, hair of Lotte's. He believed this would help him create "a stronger magnetism in her pleasure hole".

*The downward thrust*, he thought. He gave himself absolution in his diary.

"Every person has a *leading organ*, the hegemonikon, which controls the rest of the whole body thanks to its superiority. Whether it wants to or not."

*Mine always wants to*, thought Fußmann. Any reasonably intelligent physiologist would probably have diagnosed nothing more than hormonal oversteer, but Fußmann suspected a biomagnetic bond.

In his diary he described his "siderite body" as leading a "somnambulistic existence" at the Institute, achieving "temporary reanimation" only on weekends in Lotte's bed.

It was a vicious circle and Fußmann's money was dwindling fast. His visits had to be put down to an account. His desire for Lotte's "magnetic body" stood diametrically opposed to the limited scope of his financial means. Klose recommended the ever popular brothel vouchers: "A sort of discount." Fußmann thought of getting Böhme to pay him an advance on his wages, but decided instead to tell Ferrie about his problem.

"I need money, Ferrie." They were sitting in the canteen eating warmish Wiener Schnitzel when Fußmann spoke up.

"You want to pump me for money? Are you being serious?" Ferrie dabbed at his mouth.

"I'd like to have an advance", said Fußmann.

"And what for, may I ask?"

"I had an accident. My car's done for."

"Then get Böhme to lend you a commercial vehicle." Ferrie reached for his tray.

"I don't need a commercial vehicle, I need money", repeated Fußmann. "Five hundred Reichsmarks."

Ferrie did not move. Then, as if suddenly enlightened, he closed his eyes. "You've found that slut Lotte, haven't you?"

"What's that got to do with you?", growled Fußmann. "Why did you phone Lotte and warn her about me?"

"I did that in your own interest." Ferrie leaned forward. "This lady's fiancé is a psychopath. He forced me off the motorway. I'm lucky to be alive. Just thought you'd like to know that." He rubbed his brow as if he had a headache. "What do whores live off? Hm? Off the interest yield on *fixed* capital."

"Wonderful, Ferrie. You know that I adore your daft bonmots."

"That wasn't a bonmot. Now, I don't doubt that you're *fixated* but you have no capital. That tart thinks you're a rich client – a young snot with an inheritance to waste away. To tell you the truth, Karl, I couldn't afford that sort of relationship."

"With all due respect", snapped Fußmann. "You got me into this mess in the first place and now you're letting me down."

"I never gave you an order to screw that girl", protested Ferrie. He started when Böhme entered the canteen. "Listen, Karl." He was whispering now. "If both of us had the necessary money, I wouldn't mind if you moved into that brothel and took a few months out to put your hormones back into order. But, as things are..."

"You don't understand at all, Ferrie, I love this woman!"

"Oh please, you're much too intelligent for that sort of thing, Fußmann. You know just as well as I do that love is a simple deal between the brain and the genitals in order to ensure the survival of our species."

"So what", hissed Fußmann. "Will you lend me some money, yes or no?"

"No", said Ferrie. "Firstly I'm out of money, and even if I had it, I wouldn't give it to you so you can waste it all on a whore."

Fußmann jumped up and ran out of the canteen.

*I need money*, he thought. **MONEY!**

The sweet full moon was hung up behind bars. Even the everyday nude phantoms now posed in a chastity belt.

*You know where the key is, don't you?*

He knew.

## 5.

Without money a healthy man is half sick.

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

One morning Fußmann stood in front of a branch of the Reichsbank, not far from the Japanese consulate, with a loaded water pistol. There were lots of coppers around, but he was determined to push through *Plan C* – cash or cunt.

*If they catch me with the water thingummy, I'll pretend to be mad*, he thought and walked up to the counter. Whereas the writer Mantegezza thought that love could enhance the brain's activity to "above average levels", Fußmann had for days only felt a dull brooding sensation in his head, something akin to a permanent loss of consciousness. *Humiliating*, he thought. *For the first time in your life you've realised that money makes the world go round. Lotte's wrong: money's as robust as a hard cock. A strong branch gives support and security.*

When his turn came at last, he took a deep breath – and bought a Reichslottery ticket.

"I'm sure you'll crack the jackpot." The smart bank clerk was already eyeing the next customer. "Heil Hitler, you lucky beggar."

Out on the street Fußmann put the water pistol to his head and pulled the trigger. He squirted the full 25 millilitres of water into his right ear and then threw

the Bakelite toy in a high arc over the next wall. Dogs immediately began barking, and he quickly moved on.

The weekend was about to begin and Fußmann wondered who might lend him money. Even his fiancée, the Frankfurt nightingale, crossed his mind as a possible private bank.

"I've got gambling debts", he whined shortly afterwards on the telephone. "Somebody got me drunk and then ripped me off."

Johanna sighed. "As if I hadn't known already. That city's no good for you. You never used to gamble." Her voice sounded worried.

"Oh come on! Once is never, right?" He coughed when he realised that this German saying was hardly appropriate to describe his *true* addiction: he even had difficulty concentrating on the conversation, since a nude phantom of his goddess was just settling down on the laboratory table.

"I sometimes ask myself whether you're on drugs", Johanna wondered. "Every time we telephone, you seem so absent minded."

"Me? Drugs? What makes you think that?" The opium sweetie clattered against the upper row of his teeth. He even sucked the little lumps at work now, as Böhme, who often had a sore throat, thought they were cough sweets and sometimes had one. "So, are you going to lend me some money or not?"

Johanna needed some time to think it over. It sounded as if she was chewing her nails. "I'm ashamed of you, but I'll ask dad."

"Angel, I love you", purred Fußmann.

"So likely", she said and hung up.

When no money arrived, Fußmann decided to go and talk to Johanna's father personally, in order to outline his plight in the most sombre possible way. In every second *subordinate clause* he mentioned his intention to one day marry Johanna. Although he had previously waffled on about gambling debts to Johanna, he now claimed that a landlord had demanded an improperly high security for a two room

flat: "I'd like your daughter to have a better place to stay." He was lucky, the obliging bank manager and future father-in-law sent him a cheque.

*A thousand Reichsmarks*, thought Fußmann. *That'll cover three times* – and there he was, back in Lotte's bed.

For some time now he had decided to counter Lotte's practical superiority with theoretical knowledge. Van der Weck-Erlen's gigantic erotic system, which since 1907 Austrians had been calling their "imperial and royal answer to the Indian Kamasutra", was an inexhaustible libretto to him.

The number and the audacity of the positions described therein would, he secretly hoped, convince Lotte of his passionate love. One night he came to her with an index of key positions.

"But that's at least five hundred!" Lotte leafed through the *Eros-Codex for both sexes* shaking her head. "You're going to kill us, velvet eyes!"

So *what*, thought Fußmann. *Then the Russians won't have to do it for us*. The bleak situation on the Eastern Front made him even more melancholic. Nobody had mentioned an onslaught from the steppes yet, but *Operation Barbarossa* was no Blitzkrieg. For the first time German soldiers had become acquainted with Stalin's infamous multiple rocket launcher.

"Feeling depressed again, dear?"

Lotte directed his body into a position aptly named ~~the~~ *the squatting bomb*. "What's wrong with you? I'm doing my best here and you're looking grumpy. Does any of this interest you at all?"

Fußmann did not know. Her efforts seemed like *amechanical ballet* to him, a wriggling of cruel marionettes whose strings had become entangled.

Despite all their hard work they did not reach the score's final movement. Fußmann went floppy between "Valkyrie's dream" and "Desert crack", and Lotte complained about "feeling soar".

"Oh, you with your iron willy", she panted as she struggled into the cowgirl position. "I'm going to need ointment soon."

That was nonsense, since she had already – following Fußmann’s advice – applied a minerally enriched cream, in order to enhance the “soft magnetism” of the flesh. The master himself drank a phosphorous-magnesium mix containing glucose and dipped his member in spirit of ants, resulting in painful priapism which, in combination with the seam in Lotte’s crotch, turned sex into torture.

*Hell*, thought Fußmann, *but I rather like it here*. His mind increasingly resembled Athanasius Kircher’s legendary metaphor factory: he would fantasise in the dark about sex, then dream up fitting erotic metaphors and watch his body in the mirror, that was all he could handle.

The radio was on whilst they fucked – cheeky songs, *Sprechgesang* with a nasal twang accompanied by an out of tune piano, then fanfares and triumphant reports from the various fronts: the German war machine was burrowing its way into central Russia, and Lotte would commentate the “results” with the callous naivety of a football commentator. She made Klose get her a map of Europe and then marked out the front lines with topaz-headed pins.

“Karl?”

Fußmann had just completed a long ride and collapsed exhausted onto the cushions. “What?”

“You think too much.”

“You mean whilst we’re at it?”

“No, generally.”

“So what? I like to think about things. I can imagine what it must be like on the Eastern Front without having to lie in a trench and snuff it because of a shot in the stomach.”

“Who’s talking about snuffing it? I’m talking about the most concentrated form of life.”

“And I said: I can imagine what it must be like.”

“That’s what I mean. Thinking is test acting without any involvement of risk. Have you never had the desire to act?”

“I’m pretty clumsy to be honest.”

"Idiot." Lotte pulled a bit of fluff out of his navel.

"Have you never had the desire to fight – man to man?"

"Why not man to mole?", murmured Fußmann. "All you need for that is a folding spade..."

She turned around and studied the Ordnance Survey map on which she had marked out the front lines. "The world rewards those that take it. Could you kill somebody, Karl?"

"Why should I kill some poor bastard?"

"Because it would be an existential experience."

"My own existential experience is enough for me." He stroked the nape of her neck. "Take a look at me. Is this what a fighting machine looks like, hm? I'm short-sighted and have trouble breathing whilst asleep. I'm not saying that I'm just a bundle of *genetically conditioned physical deficits*, but the only thing I can reasonably master with this physique is sexual intercourse."

Lotte lowered her head. "Oh Karl, if I didn't love you so much."

"And if I didn't love myself so much", echoed Fußmann. "I just hope that the Yanks will arrive before the year's out, so that all this will be over by next spring."

"Really Karl, I thought you were smarter than that." Lotte seemed dejected. "This war is our chance to destroy the old system of values. If we lose, plutocracy will win. Don't you understand that?"

"Yes, but who d'you think should rule then?", grumbled Fußmann.

She placed her hands either side of his face and kissed him on the mouth. "This", she said. "No more and no less."

## 6.

One can say that his organism and especially his psyche merely form an appendage to the genital centre; one could therefore say that it is not a man with genitals, but instead genitals with a man.

Dr Magnus Hirschfeld, 1920

Time flew by. Fußmann's life oscillated between brothel and laboratory, and every morning he felt like a cross between Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. *The magnetic bond is wearing me out*, he thought. He only came home to change his underwear or ask his landlord if he could defer paying his debts again. His landlord would pull a long face, but then say: "Very well, first day of the next month, Herr Fußmann. After all, you're a man of honour."

*That is so true*, thought Fußmann as he counted the steps up to Lotte's room. She would welcome him always in a different costume, once a slave, then a mistress, or just a torso without a face, which Fußmann felt was - literally "the most authentic form of her ecstatic plasmatic arousal".

She was driven by pure "abstract sensuality" and Fußmann would impale her like a horny vampire.

The Harem had become his new home and he was acquainted with all its comforts: "Madame Berkeley's dungeon" (a real English torture chamber), the "water nymph's bath" (a subterranean paddling pool and sauna paradise) and the "Harem cinema", a canvas screen of about two by three metres fixed to a stretcher. Madame, who was very stingy, had only recently had it painted with Chinese white and then strewn with glitter. The projector was set up less than five metres away, and the surface now shone so brightly that Fußmann's eyes watered. But in contrast to Casanova, who liked to leaf through "lascivious copperplate engravings", Fußmann felt compelled to return there again and again. Because of some important visiting diplomats, two negotiators of the Vichy government, the

chivalry films *La tour nesle* and *Lucrezia Borgia* had been showing for several weeks, presumably to provide the guests with a francophile atmosphere. The other porn films were from Barracas, a suburb of Buenos Aires, where they had been filmed without interruption since the turn of the century.

The cinema was always well attended, Fußmann was surprised again and again. Surrounded by half naked and willing women, mature men cowered in the dark telling dirty jokes. Most of them were diplomats and officers, or captains of industry from the Ruhr region, who came to "go for a ride".

In contrast to Lotte and him they did not even seem to be groping each other.

"Decadent lot", he murmured. THE DICTATOR'S SPECIAL was just being shown, in which a lesbian showed her pubic hair, which had been shaven into the shape of Hitler's moustache. "Really rather amusing."

"The Conte thought so too", whispered Lotte. "In Rome the film's been showing for years at the *Barberini* for public entertainment."

Fußmann glanced at her suspiciously. "Are you still in touch with that nincompoop?"

She resolutely shook her head. "Why should I be? I've got you."

Apart from popping down to the cinema, weekends were pretty monotonous. Lotte crocheted oven cloths boasting swastika motifs which she sent to her mother, who lived in a sanatorium. She had no friends outside of her clientele. Sometimes her gynaecologist would phone her in the middle of the night and improvise a song at the piano which he had written especially for her. After every second line the credo would blare out of the receiver: "*Tit for tat, dick for tart, you suck cock and I eat twat!*"

"Isn't he sweet?", asked Lotte. "You should meet Waldi. You're completely different, but you'd get on very well."

"I rather doubt that." Fußmann knew all about Pfister's experiments by now and had assembled an extensive dossier on the disgraced adversary of frigidity.

"He's sdonely", said Lotte. She felt moved to tears, blew her nose into her negligee and told him about all the cultivated gentlemen she had met in the Harem,

who were not really clients but *special friends*, nice and helpful and always willing to give money or advice. "D'you really believe that?", asked Fußmann.

"Of course", she said. "You're more than a client too, aren't you?"

Fußmann nodded, but his heart sank. "*One day it'll be possible to just wash women out of one's blood,*" he wrote in his diary shortly afterwards. But that was not possible just yet and so, like all other young men, he was forced to submit to *the fate of a thinking root vegetable*.

Perhaps he was trying to kill his feelings, since he now handled the rented body rougher than before. Lotte countered this by emphasising her professionalism. She acted the role of the metropolitan robot whore with both style and *élan*. She also began to negotiate during sex: "There was no mention of this. Don't think that I'm going to position my pussy doing a handstand."

Fußmann knew by now that experienced clients are never generous and that haggling intensifies the pleasure.

"The way you haggle you should have your proof of Aryan descent checked", she once said when he squirted a load of almond milk-jelly up her arse. "If I'd known what you're really like..."

*Who ever knows?*, thought Fußmann. He lit a cigar, took a sip of cognac and then penetrated her warm bumhole singing a joyful tune. When she began fussing over an extra charge again, he promised her a considerable "financial reward for a minute's silence and more tension in your sphincter."

Lotte mostly succumbed to his wishes, sniffed coke during the *pas de deux* or filed her nails. Often she just prattled on – about her affair with the Conte ("He sang madrigals for me..."), or she asked about Johanna ("Oh Karl, I'd really love to hear her sing once. Just for fun."). Her standard repertoire included a sugar-sweet harlot's tale: she was really a girl from a good family and had been bored to death at boarding school. Her hobby had always been "men" and she had simply turned her hobby into her profession. "I'm just not one of Adam's ribs", she said, and Detsen, "my dear Detsen", was the only man who could understand her.

That was why she had recently given him a BMW sportscar. Bright red. With black leather seats. "Bought it all with your money, Karly."

*Children are cruel*, thought Fußmann and came off.

## 7.

People will always pay for two  
things – food and sex.  
I was never any good at cooking.

Madame Claude, housekeeper

Of course her little fairy tale was pure fantasy, and yet it represented a form of truth which allowed Lotte to survive. As far as Lotte's age was concerned, she had never lied to Fußmann: she was eighteen and therefore still a minor. She was born as Lotte Kaltenbronn on 1st September 1923, two minutes to midnight, at the same time that an earthquake of 7.9 on the Richter scale devastated Tokio. Whilst baby Lotte was given a slap on her bottom, close to three hundred thousand people died. The quake called "Kanto" had reoccured in intervals of about 70 years since 1703: 1703, 1782, 1853, 1923. A few supporters of the Welteis-Lehre suspected this to be proof of an "inorganic cycle". Lotte's mother had always told her about the "disaster" and had stuck newspaper articles into an autograph book, one of which was a lurid report glorifying the death of "over 600 flower girls" in Tokio's red light district *Yoshiwara*. „They all died for you, my dear.“ That was only one of many horror stories the alcoholic mother used to tell her daughter at bedtime. "No life is ever lost you know, dear." Her mother was a *secret* whore. She had a job as a shop assisant but tried earning a little extra money with occasional prostitution and supported her husband, who for years had unsuccessfully

attempted starting a career as a jazz trumpeter. He contracted TB on a pub tour and then quietly died: his body was found in a night shelter.

Lotte was a seven year old girl at the time and would accompany her mother to the Great Beerhall on Spielbudenplatz. Most of the time she would sit at a table with a glass of lemonade before her and watch how "mum" danced with officers or businessmen. She served as a "depository" for the money which her mother was paid in advance. In the early morning they wandered off home down the Reeperbahn. Her mother clung to her and Lotte would see pubs closing, the white cars of the flying squads drive off and drunk sailors crawl after them on their hands and knees sputtering nonsensical sentences.

Embarrassed, she would look up, up to the film posters along this mile of sin: *Hyenas of lust, Sadistic philanderers on the Reeperbahn* and *Whore holes in Abyssinia*. Although she found the titles revolting, she also felt secretly aroused. She knew that this had to do with the fact that she was a girl and that she had something which men wanted from her.

For five years they moved from one guesthouse to the next. It was only after her mother started working in a brothel that their financial plight took a turn for the better. She sent Lotte to a middle-class public school and paid for ballet lessons. Her attempts at turning Lotte into a paragon of virtue were however foiled by the seductive charms of a sports teacher, who deflowered Lotte on a class - wine tasting! - trip to Alsace.

By now the Nazis had got a foothold in northern Germany and professional fornication was now no longer tolerated anywhere except in Herbert Straße. More than 1500 freelance tarts were taken into preventive custody or interned in so-called "labour camps" on the city's outskirts. Those remaining had to suffer SA pimps who demanded sexual favours free of charge. The girls were obliged to report for a medical examination of their snatch - a "measure designed to protect the national body against epidemics", which the Hamburg welfare services combined with measures of social hygiene: tarts which a Nazi doctor considered to be "morally deficient" were forcibly sterilised without further ado.

Teenage girls have a lot to put up with: all the world gropes, hugs and squeezes those well-shaped little dollies. But Lotte was flattered that her mother's gentleman acquaintances were interested in her. They fondled her bum and then gave her pocket money or sweets to keep quiet about it. She did not know what to think of it.

Only after a city treasurer – weighing some two hundred pounds and sporting a walrus moustache – had shoved his index finger down her knickers, she'd pack her bags and buy a train ticket to Berlin: she wanted to leave the gutter's pong behind her once and for all.

That was shortly after her fourteenth birthday. Lotte already wore nylon stockings and high heels like a proper lady and was thus treated with the appropriate respect. She imagined that people confused her with the actress Brigitte Helm and acted the smart society woman. But the city was expensive and Lotte's little wallet was soon desperately empty. She was thinking of going back, particularly once she felt she was being tailed by an informer of the Nazi detective branch. Luckily he turned out to be a nationalist painter who offered her twenty marks for one session's work as a nude model for him. This helped her temporarily overcome her financial difficulties.

One night, as she sat tired in a café and thought about going home again, she met a young, nice SA man. Lotte liked the fact that somebody her own age was interested in her. His perspective on life seemed modern and realistic to her. They agreed over a drink to use the familiar "du" and then launched into a profound conversation on the party, parents and friends. Lotte was under the impression that he was sounding her out – he had come to the right person there: once she told him how her rich daddy had disowned her, then again she said she had left home because her father had tried to stop her becoming an actress. Knut, as he called himself, found both stories convincing. He said he hated fathers "in general" and offered to put the lady up at his place for the time being: "The least I can do for you, Fräulein." She thought so too. After her sixth vodka orange she was no longer aware of what was happening to her anyhow.

Everything seemed alright, however: Knut made breakfast for her the next morning. The first week he took her out and introduced her to his friends. Like him, most of them were in the lower ranks of the SA and showed her old and new scars, which they had apparently sustained in fights with the "redstarts". Lotte presumed they meant the communists.

She was too much in love to ask herself where all the money came from, which they squandered every night. It was as if Knut had a gold-ass. His financial standing was only surpassed by his persistently high spirits – until one day the mysterious source suddenly dried up. The gentleman turned into a misery-guts and a scrooge. "What? Don't you have any money of your own?", he barked at her in a department store. "I've got more than enough debts, can't you understand that?"

Lotte understood very well. She loved Knut. And Knut loved her. Her suspicions were not even aroused when he dragged her to a tattoo parlour. "Pick one", he said pointing to a list of dirty maxims that would seal their bond for life: "Wolf's bride", "First class fuck sow", "Come in if you're German". Faced with this selection she quickly settled for "Sieg Geil". The needle took almost two hours to decorate her backside with Gothic script, then they went home and Knut creamed her with ointment.

A few days later he arrived with an old man, a retired cavalry captain, who, after they had had a cup of coffee together, told her that he would now proceed to fuck her hard up the arse. With Knut's kind permission that was, which he already had. Of course she refused and Knut became so angry that he beat her black and blue. That same night she left with a flaming anus.

She wanted to go home to her mother in Hamburg and work in the brothel canteen or clean spittoons. As chance would have it she bumped into an elegantly clothed traveller as she stood sobbing on the railway platform. He was tanned and wore a white Panama hat. "One should never ignore the tears of a beautiful woman", he said and reached for her suitcase. "May I, madam? My name is Detlevsen, Rupert Detlevsen. Whatever's worrying you, please think of your problem as solved."

Lotte thought she could hear an altogether novel politeness in his words. For the first time in her life she actually told somebody the truth. She even mentioned her little encounter with the cavalry officer.

Detsen was unperturbed. "Dear Lotte, you're one of life's natural aristocrats. Somebody with a weaker disposition would have collapsed in your place, but you've been strengthened by your experiences instead." "If you say so", sighed Lotte. "Now please take me to a police station." "Nonsense." Detsen put a few coins on the table. "Nowadays trivialities are best taken care of by oneself."

A taxi took her to his flat by the Wannsee. And there, in front of a gigantic photo of an oil derrick, he handed her the key:

"Make yourself at home. I shall be abroad on business over the next four weeks. And don't worry, we won't let Knutie get away."

She did not know why she immediately trusted him. His place seemed well looked after. There was a housekeeper to take care of little everyday jobs, and Detsen phoned every evening a bit before half past nine. She learned that he was in charge of a building site on the Persian Gulf, and together with him she hoped that he would become rich fast. As before, she lived without worries from day to day.

One night he had her picked up by a car. The man showed her a Gestapo ID card, and she felt very scared. The limousine stopped before a remote farm, the way across a muddy field had been laid out with wooden planks. The driver whistled a popular tune and shone the way for her with a torch.

As they crossed the yard she already heard a suppressed scream. The torch beam wandered over to a tumbled down smithy. She saw four naked men tied up with wire lying on the floor in front of an anvil. One of them was Knut, his face so swollen that she had difficulty recognising him.

A man in a grey lounge suit nodded briefly as she entered. He had a face like a ferret and a pistol stuck in his belt.

Detsen welcomed her by kissing her hand and giving her a subservient look. "I keep my promises", he said. His jacket, a white shirt and a tie lay neatly folded

across a ladder. He was still wearing the Panama hat. His vest was bathed in sweat and the sawn-off iron rod in his right hand was covered in blood. Detsen seemed to have noticed her facial expression: "I can imagine what you must be thinking, but Knutie boy wouldn't apologise. Instead he tried to ambush me with a few of his Nazi thugs."

The iron rod went down indiscriminately.

Lotte could feel her knees going soft.

"So, what shall we do with the little piggy?"

"I don't know", whispered Lotte.

The man with the ferret face brought her a chair. "There you go, Fräulein." When she did not react he shoved the seat into the backs of her knees.

Knut squirmed. Amusing bubbling sounds came out of his swollen mouth.

"How droll", said Detsen. "He can't even speak properly."

This was hardly surprising – after all, his jawbone had been broken. Lotte listened to the gurgling sounds with her eyes closed. Detsen translated for her.

"Shut up, Bacher. Görtz, keep quiet! Our friend here's doing his best to recite his little apology: Lotte... dear Lotte... I'm sorry. Ah well." He thumped Knut on the head and smiled encouragingly at Lotte. "It's all up to you now, madam. What shall we do? Skin him? Blind him? Castrate him?" He pulled a cut-throat razor out of his trouser pocket and opened it. "Believe me Knutie, one day you'll look back on this as a form of liberation." He grabbed his nuts and Knutie screamed when he felt the blade against his scrotum.

"Please don't", said Lotte. "Detsen, please, you've punished him enough already." She used the familiar "du".

Detsen smiled. "You said 'du'? How nice."

But he insisted on his plan. "I don't understand your objections, Lotte. The life expectancy of this organism is ten to the power of ten seconds. Knutie's no more than a big insect, vermin. He's not going to need his balls anymore, there where he's going."

"I can't stand the sight of blood", said Lotte.

"Well that changes things." Detsen let go of the man.

There was a thankful sob from the floor.

"Don't start celebrating too soon", said Bacher.

Detsen nodded. He took Lotte to one side. "I'm sorry. We can't let these boys go."

"Why not?"

"Why? These gentlemen are dangerous criminals. A good beating won't change them. If I let 'em go, they'll come back."

"But what shall we do?"

Detsen shrugged his shoulders. He seemed to be enjoying his private chat with her. "The easiest thing to do would be to stack them on top of each other, drench them in petrol and then set fire to the lot. Quick and safe."

Lotte was silent.

"Don't worry. Nobody'll miss these bastards."

"Wait." Lotte's mouth had gone dry. "I'll talk to Knut."

The driver stepped up behind her and cleared his throat. "Look what I found, sir." He was carrying a medieval flail across his shoulder. "Out in the yard. How about the old Schnitzel-beating game? What d'you reckon Bacher?"

The ferret nodded. "Sounds good." He undid his cuffs. "But only if the lady gives us permission."

Detsen looked into Lottes frightened eyes. "You've gotit", he said and put his arm around her shoulder. "You should have said 'burn 'em'."

Lotte tried not to look as the flails flew back and forth: the naked bodies writhed like earwigs on a smouldering hotplate. There was no position which could protect them from the blows raining down upon them. She turned her head away, but even on the wooden walls she saw the shadows of furiously working windmills.

The Gestapo men were experts. They regularly stopped for short breaks, poured cold water over their victims and as soon as the beaten limbs began to move again would return to their labours with renewed vigour.

After all four skulls had been cracked open, Görtz wiped the sweat off his brow: "Those Schnitzels have been beaten."

"About time too", said Detsen and recommended that the dead be thrown into the cesspit.

Lotte drove back with Detsen. They did not say a word for almost half an hour, then he suddenly turned off into a quiet lane.

"Where are you going?", she wanted to know.

Instead of answering, he stopped and shoved her onto the backseat.

"Hm, that was good", he said afterwards.

"Yes", she purred.

"I meant the way we took Knutie's breath away." Detsen looked at her thoughtfully. "You didn't bat an eyelid, I like that about you." His fingers touched her lips.

"You're very special, girl, a force of nature. I bet you were born during an earthquake."

She said nothing *7.9 on the Richter scale*, she just thought. Inside she was aglow with happiness.