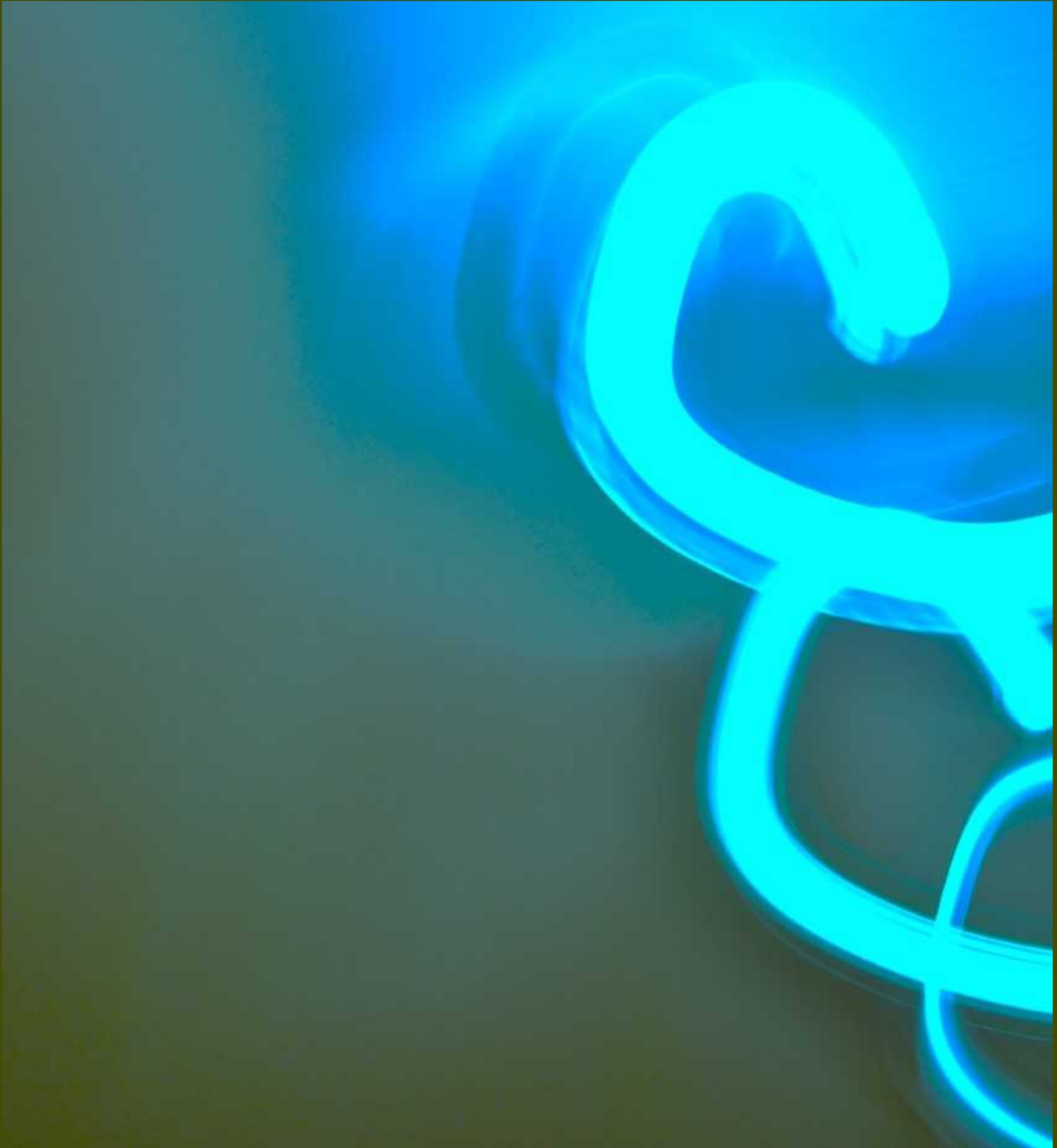


LITERA**SEA**

The EUF Literary Journal



Issue 2: Movement

12/24

Note of Thanks

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who made the second issue of the Literary Journal *Literasea* of Europa Universität Flensburg possible. This edition, centered around the theme of *Movement*, is a product of collaboration, creativity, and a shared commitment to fostering literary expression within our university community.

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We thank all the authors and artists whose contributions enrich this issue and everyone who submitted cover designs. A special acknowledgment goes to Jacob Frederik Horn, whose cover artwork beautifully encapsulates the spirit of *Movement*.

Thank you all for your invaluable contributions to this journal.

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Issue 2: Movement

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Issue 2: Movement

Content

Some pieces in this journal might contain sensitive themes and topics.

For further information on the exact content warnings, check page 123.

Preface	I
Editing & Publishing Team	
Preface	II
Creative Writing Team	
The Rivers	1
a poem by Wienke Niedermanner	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
I Went. So You Did, Too.	2
a poem by Najem Eisa	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Marionetten	4
an artwork by Jule Heyen	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Tides	5
a short story by Jule Heyen	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Eye of a Needle	8
a poem by Katrin Stamm	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Persico und Dirty Harry	9
a short story by Jacob Frederik Horn	
<i>Hochschule Flensburg</i>	

Flying	18
a poem by Jule Heyen	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Falling	19
a poem by Jule Heyen	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Ascending a Staircase	20
an artwork by Jacob Spiegel	
<i>Hochschule Flensburg</i>	
Metanoia	21
a poem by Katrin Stamm	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Ode to the Abyss	22
a poem by Lukas Bartsch	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Floating	24
a short story by Jule Heyen	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Liebe	28
a poem by Sylvie Akouvi Essenam Adjeoda	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Leben	29
a poem by Sylvie Akouvi Essenam Adjeoda	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Between the Tides	30
a short story by Katrin Stamm	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	

Stand Up	31
an artwork by Catalin Tirlea <i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Dead Lovers	32
a poem by Wienke Niedermanner <i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Dancing	33
excerpts from a novel by Jule Heyen <i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Crimson Lakes	46
a poem by Wienke Niedermanner <i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Rumstadt	47
a poem by Timm Wynhoff <i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
New Waves on the Shore	48
a poem by Hanna Bünning <i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
5 vor 12	50
a poem by Jacob Frederik Horn <i>Hochschule Flensburg</i>	
Schwertsarbeit	51
a comic by Lasse Sörensen <i>Hochschule Flensburg</i>	
Family	52
a poem by Jacob Frederik Horn <i>Hochschule Flensburg</i>	

Ein besonderes Erlebnis	53
a short story by Sylvie Akouvi Essenam Adjeoda	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Gleis im Nirgendwo	57
a poem by Jacob Frederik Horn	
<i>Hochschule Flensburg</i>	
The Walker in the Wheat	58
an excerpt from a novel project by Luc Salinger	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Paule	66
a short story by Karlotta Harms	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Untitled	75
a selection from a photo series by Victoria Claußen	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Leaf	76
a poem by Lukas Bartsch	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
The Mink Revolution - A Cautionary Tale	78
an excerpt from a novel project by Luc Salinger	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Sic Transit Gloria Mundi	87
a poem by Lukas Bartsch	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Dusk	87
a poem by Lukas Bartsch	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	

To Make Whole	88
an essay by Liv Hambrett	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Herbst	99
a poem by Jacob Frederik Horn	
<i>Hochschule Flensburg</i>	
A Night Out	100
a short story by Nick Bussenius	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Meine Melancholie und der wütende Vogel	107
a short story by Ani	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Tide	109
a short story by Annika Dreffein	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Dreaming	113
a short story by Svea Bauer	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Lífið – Leben	118
a short story by Anaëlle-Sophie Hagen	
<i>Europa-Universität Flensburg</i>	
Content Warnings	123

Preface

Editing & Publishing Team

Dear readers,

the *literasean* journey continues and we are delighted to present to you the second issue of the EUF literary journal. Following last semester's great success with various inspiring, captivating and impressive entries of students and staff of EUF, we are exploring new shores and will also feature entries of students from Hochschule Flensburg.

In this ever-changing world, movement is everywhere and shows its different faces in our everyday lives. This issue's theme offers our authors and artists the chance to reflect on what movement means to them, whether it be of a social, cultural, political, or personal nature, in time or in space.

Like the waves of the ocean, *Literasea* is in constant motion and our Editing & Publishing team grew over the past few months. We restructured our ways of working as a team and set new goals that we want to achieve with the publication of this second issue.

We hope you enjoy reading and discovering this semester's issue of *Literasea*. Maybe it will also inspire you to get creative!

Your Editing & Publishing Team

Preface

Creative Writing Team

The second issue of *Literasea* lives up to its name. Many of our contributors found themselves standing on the shore, watching the water, the movement of the ocean providing both structure and mystery to their stories. But it wasn't just the relentlessness of the tide that provided our writers with fodder. The elasticity of movement means the pages you are about to read are filled with interpretations of it that are in equal measures clever, emotional, lyrical and unexpected. Lucid dreams, a ballerina captured in motion forever. Ideology. Revolution. Migration. Pushing through a pulsing night club looking for her. The secrecy of wheat fields, rustling in the wind, a leaf's drift, the moon's ascent. The arc of a relationship from its most incipient moments, to the fury, or perhaps inevitability, of its end. We are, it seems, if nothing else, always in flux.

As this issue goes to print, the world is going through a time of particular, disquieting upheaval. Perhaps that can always be said of the planet and those who inhabit it, but to examine how we move through the world and how the world moves through us, feels at the moment more necessary than usual.

Please enjoy issue 2 of *Literasea*. We hope it moves something in you.

The Rivers

a poem by Wienke Niedermanner

Black swamp, wave of woe,
Carry me safely down below,
Through the gates to sunless lands,
Guide me, gentle ferryman.
My tongue is tied with ancient gold,
My pride and virtue burned and sold,
A thousand souls stacked on a boat,
Seek sanctuary to unload.

Cold, sheer, faithful oath,
The greatest hero's fateful clothes,
Dreadful waves for sullen men,
Drown them in your punishment.
You won't run dry, you loyal bane,
Killed kings and boys that were too vain,
My blood is gushing, heinous tide,
Might never find some place to hide.

I Went. So You Did, Too.

a poem by Najem Eisa

I tend to go on a walk
to forget how to stalk
so I can listen to nature talk.

It tells me to take a rest
and I embrace it like a guest.
This feeling deep in my chest
searching for attention.

From him, me or you
losing touch in that hue
not green, not grey, not blue.

Surprisingly tender.
And I still wonder
between here and there
every footstep in despair
my legs need a chair
a way too long to bear
but I do care
about me.

It keeps stretching this mile
I'm swimming in the Nile
on my phone I dial
no more.

It may have been May
now leaves are in decay.
You must be healing
whilst I'm stuck to my ceiling –
to the skies leading –
a ray of emotions feeling –
not dealing.

But there is no escape
no light at the end of the tube
wheels made out of cubes
it is frozen, the Danube.

And still
he made the water run through
and I stood in a queue
but in the end. I went.
So you did, too.

Marionetten

an artwork by Jule Heyen



Tides

a short story by Jule Heyen

Content warnings may apply. Please check page 123 for more information.

There's an old story, they whisper it on the coast, that tells the tale of the woman in grey. She stands on the sands of cold beaches, on cloudy days, her dress as dark as the sea and the sky minutes before a storm. She stands there, waiting. Waiting for what? No one could ever tell me. She leaves with the sun and returns with the storm, the wind moving her dress as if pulled by invisible hands.

She's a spirit, they say. Fragile as a seashell, and just as common. She won't hurt you, unless you hurt her first.

How would I hurt her if she's a spirit? The children ask.

With cruel words and broken promises.

The elders use the story as a cautionary tale, a lesson to teach children not to gossip and lie. But they don't really believe in her, so neither do their children.

These children later make up their own stories, their own explanations. She's a ghost, they say. A woman who drowned. A tragic accident, one says, murder, the other. A suicide, they finally agree. They joke around. But none of them ever dares to go up to her.

You ask her, one says. I dare you.

She's scary. I want to go home.

Fine, I'll do it then.

That child was never seen again.

She's a curse, the parents later tell me. She drags you out there, faster than you can swim. As if your legs are tied to the ocean floor. Hopeless. They start believing in her, then.

They cry and scream and beg and curse, but their child doesn't return.

She was already there back in my day, when I first visited, my father would tell me as a child. A warning of the sea and its cold, cruel arms. He always looked sad when he talked about her. Years later, I find out why.

She took your mother, too. Faster than your eyes could follow. One minute there, gone the next. Dragged to the bottom of the sea, never to be seen again. Well, she... He pauses. He doesn't want to talk about it, he says.

I ask him again, weeks later.

Well, she was seen again. That was the worst part. The tides take and the tides return. A beautiful woman in a beautiful dress.

I never knew much about my mother. She died long before I could remember her. But I know she believed in the woman, so I do, too.

She was there the first time I ever saw the northern sea. The dark grey of her dress almost blending into the waves, her hair blowing in

the wind. Just as described. She wasn't looking at me, had her back turned. Instead, she stared out at the sea. Watching. Waiting.

Waiting for what? I later ask.

The men and women that went away and never returned, the elders say. She warns you not to journey out too far, not to test your limits. To respect the sea.

I don't quite believe their stories, but I do believe in her.

When I finally see her again, after weeks of sunshine, she is looking back at me. Something inside me seems to recognise her. Grey dress, grey sky, grey sea. She smiles and turns and walks away. Out into the sand flats.

I know I'm not supposed to go, the water's coming, any minute now.

I follow her, regardless.

They weren't entirely wrong, the elders and the children and my father. She does tell you of the sea. But she is no warning. She's a lure. She pulls you in, slowly, invisibly. Before you notice it's much too late.

I feel the cold water soaking through my shoes. And yet I keep walking. I see her there, in the distance, always just out of reach. Just a little further, I think. And then I realise that I can't see the land anymore.

See, they warn you of the tides. But they never say just how tempting it is to stay just a little longer and go just a little further. They don't warn

you how you'll feel in control until you're drowning. They didn't tell me
she was waiting for me.

And, just like my mother before me, I sink.

Eye of a Needle

a poem by Katrin Stamm

Pass through
the first sound
when time
bore space

Become small
Become less
than a grain

Step down

Three
Two
One

And leave
And enter

Persico und Dirty Harry

a short story by Jacob Frederik Horn

Ein dumpfer Knall. Rascheln, metallisches Klimpern. Zwei Umdrehungen – die Haustür ist verschlossen. Ich drehe mich um und schiebe meinen linken Jackenärmel nach oben. *Schon 7:08 Uhr, jetzt aber hopp.* Während ich mich schnellen Schrittes zur Bushaltestelle bewege, wird mir erst langsam bewusst, wie kalt es heute eigentlich ist. Auf dem Gehweg liegt ein wenig Schnee und die Autos, die ich im Augenwinkel erkenne als ich sie passiere, haben gefrorene Scheiben. *Zum Glück muss ich jetzt nicht kratzen, denke ich und gehe festen Schrittes weiter.*

Ich kann die Bushaltestelle schon sehen und ich verlangsame mein Tempo ein wenig. Kurz halte ich inne, blicke nach unten und schließe den Reißverschluss meiner Jacke. Doch kaum schaue ich wieder nach oben, sehe ich, wie sich mein Bus langsam aber sicher in Richtung der Haltestelle bewegt. Die ersten Schulkinder zücken schon ihre Monatskarten und trotten in Richtung des Haltestellenschildes. Und täglich grüßt das Murmeltier.

Ich setze zu einem Usain Bolt verdächtigen Sprint an und renne wie ein Verrückter in Richtung der Haltestelle. Meine lederne Umhängetasche schwingt hin und her und droht das ein oder andere Mal, mich zu erwürgen. Kalte Luft strömt in meine Lungenflügel und erzeugt in meinem Inneren ein widerliches Brennen. Natürlich taucht jetzt auch noch eine alte Dame mit ihrem Dackel vor mir auf dem Gehweg auf. *Musst*

du ausgerechnet jetzt mit deinem scheiß Köter Gassi gehen?!, fluche ich in mich hinein und weiche auf die Straße aus, damit ich die Frau samt ihres Hundes nicht in Football-Manier über den Haufen renne. Jetzt nur noch einmal kurz Vollgas geben. Verzweifelt sehe ich, wie gerade die letzte Person in den Bus einsteigt und sich die Vordertür zu schließen droht.

Ohne Rücksicht auf Verluste überquere ich die letzte Kreuzung, die mich und meine Mitfahrgelegenheit noch trennt, und erreiche schließlich mit einem Puls von 180 die Fahrertür des Busses. Sie ist gerade dabei sich zu schließen und ich klopfe gegen die Scheibe. Der Kopf des Busfahrers dreht sich wie in Zeitlupe in meine Richtung und mir offenbart sich ein Gesicht, das nichts Gutes verheißen lässt.

Ausgerechnet heute sitzt dort auf dem Fahrersitz dieses heruntergekommenen Fortbewegungsmittels der Busfahrer, mit dem ich schon so einige unschöne Erfahrungen teilen durfte. Im Geiste sehe ich mich schon zur Linie 11 laufen und deren Haltestelle ist 500 Meter entfernt.

Vielleicht sollte ich heute auch einfach zu Hause bleiben und Netflix gucken, es ist eh viel zu kalt, um in die Uni zu gehen. Eine nette Kommilitonin mit vernünftiger Handschrift lässt sich eh immer finden, sodass die Mitschriften auch einen Weg zu den Faulen und Kranken finden – oder in meinem Fall zu denen, die den Bus verpassen und dann aus Frustration zu Hause bleiben.

Doch obwohl ich gestandener Agnostiker bin, werde ich Teil eines kleinen Wunders. Die buschig-grauen Augenbrauen eines Gesichtes,

das schwerlich noch genervter aussehen könnte, ziehen sich zusammen.

Aber dann geschieht es: Die rechte Hand des Mannes, der täglich über das rechtzeitige Erscheinen von Menschen entscheidet, bewegt sich zum Türöffner und mit einem lauten Zischen öffnet sich die Fahrertür des Busses. Warme, stickige Luft strömt mir entgegen. Ich habe es also mal wieder geschafft.

Schnell fummle ich aus meinem Portemonnaie mein Semester-Ticket, halte es dem Fahrer vor das Gesicht, er nickt es miesmutig ab und ich begeben mich zu meinem Stammplatz. Dort angekommen merke ich erst, wie unglaublich heiß mir jetzt gerade ist. Mein Gesicht pocht – von außen betrachtet habe ich wahrscheinlich die gesunde Hautfarbe einer reifen Tomate – und ich schwitze ganz fürchterlich. *Und am siebten Tage erfand Gott das Deodorant.* Ich muss fast ein wenig über den Gedanken schmunzeln. Das sind eben die Gedanken, die einem nach einem schweißtreibenden Sprint durch Winterfell durch den Kopf gehen.

Um nicht weiter mit meinen idiotischen Gedanken alleine zu sein, krame ich aus meiner Jackentasche meine Kopfhörer. Zunächst reiße ich mir geradezu den Schal vom Hals und öffne meine Jacke, damit ich nicht ganz eingehe. Schnell das Kabel unter dem Hoodie durchschieben und mit der Handybuchse in der Hosentasche verbinden. Eigentlich sollte man ja vermutlich sein Handy nicht in der Hosentasche haben, gerade, wenn man sich noch vermehren möchte. Da heute aber keine Familienplanung im Programm steht und das abgesehen davon eine Style-Sache

ist – vergleichbar mit dem Kopfhörerkabel unter dem Pulli –, lasse ich es einfach an seinem gewohnten Platz. *Schon merkwürdig, wenn man bedenkt, dass ich sonst keinen Trends hinterherrenne.* Jetzt nur noch die Kopfhörer in die Ohren und abschalten.

Kaum Spotify geöffnet, wird mir angezeigt, dass meine letzte Begegnung mit Musik *MC Fitti – 30 Grad* gewesen sein muss. Jetzt Sommer wäre zwar geil, aber ich schwitze eh schon wie ein Schwein. Bis ich mich schlussendlich dafür entschieße, meine Rockplaylist zu hören, hat der Bus schon zwei weitere Haltestellen abgegrast.

Die gesamte Fahrt über lasse ich meinen Blick abwechselnd durch den Bus oder durch die an mir vorbeiziehende Stadt schweifen. Es steigen nach und nach immer mehr Leute zu und der Bus nimmt sukzessive eine Füllung an, die einem Klaustrophoben fürchterliche Angstzustände bereiten würde. Mit zunehmender Beladung steigt auch die eh schon tropische Wärme ins Unermessliche. Ich ziehe notgedrungen auch meine Winterjacke aus.

Da mein Körper sich jetzt nicht mehr ausschließlich darauf konzentrieren muss, nicht literweise Schweiß zu produzieren, werden meine anderen Körperfunktionen aktiver. Ganz zu meinem Verdruss ist mein Geruchssinn heute in Topform und lässt mich in voller Pracht an all den schönen Gerüchen einer Busfahrt teilhaben. Ich versuche, meine Atmung auf ein Minimum zu beschränken und mich wieder meiner Musik zu widmen.

I was made for lovin' you ertönt als nächster Song in meiner Playlist. Man könnte meinen es wäre Schicksal, denn just in diesem Moment fällt mir auf, dass gerade eine wahre Schönheit eingestiegen ist. Eine junge Frau, vielleicht 20 Jahre alt und sie sieht wirklich umwerfend aus. Schulterlanges, feuerrotes Haar, ein Lippenstift der ebenso rot ist und eine traumhafte Figur. Dazu trägt sie kniehohes, schwarze Stiefel. Sie steht dort einfach im Gang und schaut gleichgültig aus dem Fenster.

All der Gestank und die unerträgliche Hitze verlieren für einen Augenblick ihre Wirkung und ich kann nicht anders und schaue sie einfach an. Auf einmal blickt sie zu mir herüber und für den Bruchteil einer Sekunde treffen sich unsere Blicke. Ein Lächeln huscht ihr über das Gesicht. Auch ich muss lächeln, da ich mir fast sicher bin, dass ich ihr gefalle. Während sie danach jedoch wieder die Harte spielt und erneut desinteressiert dreinblickt, wage ich in regelmäßigen Abständen weitere Blicke in ihre Richtung. Ab und an treffen unsere Blicke sich dennoch, da auch sie es anscheinend nicht ganz lassen kann, nach mir zu schauen. Ich bin mir weiterhin sicher, dass die Mimik sie fortwährend verrät. Ihre vermeintliche Coolness scheint gespielt.

Das ganze Spiel des heimlichen Anschauens erstreckt sich über mehrere Haltestellen, was mir jedoch gar nicht richtig auffällt, da meine Gedanken – meine Augen noch viel mehr – gerade um andere Dinge kreisen. Bewusst wird mir das erst, als ein Mann mit der Statur eines Sumoringers die Idylle zerstört, indem er sich direkt vor das einzige stellt, das diese Fahrt bis zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt erträglich gemacht hat.

Ein grundsätzlich anderes Bild tut sich mir auf: Ein käsebleicher, fatter Kerl mit einer Sonnenbrille und millimeterlangem Haar, das schon eher an eine Glatze als an eine noch vorhandene Frisur erinnert. Dazu trägt er einen Pullover der Band *Frei.Wild*. Ich spüre nichts als Verachtung für diesen Kerl. Das rührt aber weniger aus seiner modischen Bekennung zu dieser Rechtsrock-Band als aus der Tatsache, dass er meine Phase der post-jugendlichen Schwärmerei unterbrochen hat. *Vielleicht ist sie ja morgen wieder im Bus*, denke ich – hoffe ich viel eher – und merke just in dem Moment, dass auch meine Fahrt an der nächsten Haltestelle endet.

Flink ziehe ich meinen Schal wieder an, werfe meine Jacke über und ziehe den Reißverschluss hoch. Durch die Lautsprecher ertönt in einer Lautstärke, die eindeutig an das Hörvermögen der Generation 60+ angepasst ist, die Ansage für den nächsten Stopp.

Der Bus hält in einer Art, die den Witterungsverhältnissen nicht wirklich angepasst ist und das Murren einiger Fahrgäste ertönt. Mein Ausstieg ist geprägt von gemischten Gefühlen. Keine Lust auf Uni, die allzu schnell endende Begegnung mit dieser jungen Dame und der abstoßende Möchtegern-Skinhead ergeben in der Summe eine eher bedrückende Gefühlslage. Eben dieser bedenkt mich während meines Ausstiegs noch mit einem Blick, der töten könnte. Wahrscheinlich hat er durch seine Sonnenbrille doch erspähen können, dass ich ihm nicht ganz wohlgesonnen bin und sich das durchaus in meiner Mimik widerspiegelt hat.

Am liebsten würde ich ihm jetzt ein gepflogenes „Fick dich selbst, du rechte Sau!“ in seine aufgequollene Visage schreien. Zeit und Ort sind jedoch mehr als unpassend und ein Handgemenge am Morgen möchte ich auch nicht provozieren. Zumal ich mich sonst als gestandenen Pazifisten beschreiben würde.

Innerlich koche ich zwar noch vor Wut, sobald ich jedoch den Bus verlasse, fühle ich mich wie in Sibirien. Angesetzt ist ein 15-minütiger Fußmarsch zur Uni und ich mache mich schweren Herzens auf. Besonders weit komme ich jedoch nicht, da sich unweit der Bushaltestelle eine Menschentraube gebildet hat.

Von einer richtigen Masse kann man zwar nicht sprechen, aber es sind schon circa 10 Leute. Sie haben sich um eine Bank versammelt. Eben diese Bank befindet sich auf dem Gehweg und ich überlege schon die Straßenseite zu wechseln, während ich mich langsam auf sie zu bewege.

Wie aus dem nichts ertönt plötzlich ein Martinshorn und die Musik, welche eben noch meine Ohren beglückte, ist passé. In Windeseile kommt ein Krankenwagen herangeschossen und hält dann abrupt in der Nähe der Bank auf dem Bürgersteig. Ich ziehe mir die Kopfhörer aus den Ohren und bewege mich von Neugier gepackt in Richtung der Bank. Einer der Sanitäter steigt gerade aus und vertreibt Schaulustige, als sich mir ein Bild auftut, dass ich mit Sicherheit nicht so schnell wieder vergessen werde.

Auf der Holzbank sitzt beziehungsweise liegt viel eher ein Mann mittleren Alters. Er hat zotteliges graues Haar und einen Bart, der vermutlich durch Zigarettenrauch einen orangenen Anstrich bekommen hat. Sein Gesicht ist braun gebrannt, Flecke, die Tumore sein könnten, erstrecken sich über sein Gesicht. Es macht einen faltigen, ja gar einen abgenutzten Eindruck. Am Körper trägt er lediglich ein dreckiges Holzfällerhemd, aus dessen Hemdtasche eine Zigarettenschachtel guckt. Als mein Blick weiter nach unten wandert, vorbei an der versifften Jeans und den zerschlissenen Turnschuhen, fällt mir etwas auf, das mich aus irgendeinem Grund noch mehr fesselt als der Rest des Bildes.

Dort unter der Bank stehen eine Flasche *Dirty Harry* und eine Flasche *Persico*. Zwei kleine Fläschchen, solche wie man sie im Kassenbereich von Supermärkten kaufen kann. Neben diesen zwei Schnäpsen eine kreisrunde Flüssigkeitsansammlung mit Stückchen drinnen – eindeutig Erbrochenes. Mir wird wahnsinnig schlecht, ich kann jedoch meinen Blick nicht abwenden, bin wie gefesselt.

Während die Sanitäter wohl die Vitalzeichen des Mannes prüfen, starre ich weiterhin auf die beiden Flaschen unter der Bank und mir wird irgendwie klar, dass dieser arme Kerl schon längst nicht mehr unter uns weilt. Sie stehen einfach nur da unter der Bank, fast so als würden sie sich verstecken. Gleichzeitig erscheinen sie auch werbereif positioniert – leicht gedreht, sodass man das Etikett zwar erkennt und dennoch die Flaschen nicht direkt von vorne sieht. Mich beschleicht ein komisches Gefühl, welches ich nicht so richtig beschreiben kann. Eine Mischung

aus Hass und tiefem Mitgefühl für den Kerl ergreifen von mir Besitz. Hass nicht auf ihn, er liegt dort ganz alleine. Wahrscheinlich ist er sogar einsam gestorben. Nein, die Wut, die sich auf einmal durch meinen Körper bahnt, gilt den Menschen, die dafür gesorgt haben, dass er jetzt hier liegt. Ich kenne natürlich keinen von ihnen, kann auch nur vermuten, warum er hier liegt, aber im tiefsten Innern glaube ich den Grund für das Schicksal dieses Mannes zu kennen. Vielleicht hatte ja auch er mal ein erfülltes Leben. Eins ohne diese zwei kleinen Taschenfreunde. Aber unsere Zeit bietet für Fehler keinen Platz, auch wenn sie nicht immer selbstverschuldet sind. *Bestimmt Stress mit dem Chef was? Dann die Frau und die Kinder weg und keiner da, der dich auffängt. Scheiße so was.*

An der Szenerie bewegt sich ein Mann vorbei. Er hat schwarze, feine Schuhe an und trägt einen Aktenkoffer bei sich. Seine Jacke sieht sündhaft teuer aus. Er würdigt den Verstorbenen nur eines kurzen Blickes und schüttelt im Vorbeigehen seinen Kopf. *Schon das zweite Arschloch, dem ich heute begegne.*

Ich merke, dass mich die Rettungskräfte erbost anschauen, da auch ich mich zu einem ekligen Gaffer gemacht habe. *Von meinem Mitgefühl kannst du dir leider auch nichts mehr kaufen mein Freund. Ich rücke meine Tasche zurecht und wechsle schnellen Schrittes die Straßenseite. Ich muss hier einfach nur noch weg, zurück in meine Studentenblase.*

Wie es aussieht, trage auch ich unter meinen Sneakern eigentlich Budapester.

Flying

a poem by Jule Heyen

Up and up and
Up again
The endless climb for endless gain

You'll have it all, up on the top
Just never think about the drop
The higher you get, the lower you'll fall
But would that be so bad at all?
Potential wasted
Disappointing child, is
the mirror image you created
not what you always had in mind?

But in the end, what does it matter?
Always striving to be better
Yet never good enough for you
I'm so tired of falling through
The net of all your expectations
Stone cold stares of generations
Whispering, screaming, talking over me
Never asking who I want to be

And what I'm realising is
That flying can feel like
Falling too

Falling

a poem by Jule Heyen

Falling, sinking,
tumbling down
On a road only my own
Wind in my hair
Clouds on my skin
Is this the way I've always been?
She never got her chance to shine
That reckless,
joyful,
Crazy child
Her light had always been too bright
They say I'm falling, falling off
The throne of what you "do" and "must"
To step away and just be free
The rabbit hole they are convinced
Will surely come to claim its fee
Another fight and ever since
I took that step, that final leap
They stare and cry and scream and weep
But what they never say is
That falling can feel like
Flying too

Ascending a Staircase

an artwork by Jacob Spiegel



Metanoia

a poem by Katrin Stamm

In undurchdringlicher Schwärze
harre ich offenen Auges
im Innern der Menschenhülle
öffne die Tür
nach innen
wende mich
in mich selbst
und schreite
durch mich hindurch
nach draußen

Ode to the Abyss

a poem by Lukas Bartsch

O gracious crucible of my lone soul,
 Many a night I drank deep from your well
Falling beneath the stormy waves in whole,
 Enchanted – cursed by your alluring spell.
 Old – older still than Prometheus’s clay,
Yawning just beneath the veil thin, unseen.
 Realm of Oneiroi, god of sweetest lies:
Cast me not back to the light – let me stay
 Stay beneath starless skies which long have been,
 The boundless patrons of my onyx eyes.

When she emerges from the vast depths below
 To call upon you with harsh, cold command
And shroud June’s flowers in driven snow,
 Let not the display of her power grand
Besiege the levees of the mortal will.
 Heed her oratory but not her call.
 Turn, then, away from Erebus beloved,
Her deceitful nightsong echoing still
 Far behind your heart through the timeless hall,
 Ere’ your soul wanders the fields of the dead.

For her countless eyes are ponds without light,
 Tombs of men far too conscious to remain,
Who dwell now in darkest eternal night,
 Their forgotten inquiries died in vain,
For their gaze was imprisoned by her then,
 To be mirrored back into them in kind.
 Reflections all consuming, piercing through
 All but the most Diogenean of men.
No – no, revere her not for you will find,
 She will gaze longingly back into you.

Floating

a short story by Jule Heyen

Content warnings may apply. Please check page 123 for more information.

She couldn't shake the feeling of someone's eyes on her, following her every move. She couldn't see anyone, but she felt them. She felt watched, stalked.

'Is anyone there?' She asked.

No sound, no response. Just darkness around her.

It looked as if she was floating. Her arms were stretched above her head, her eyes closed and her head thrown back. Her legs were stretched in an almost inhuman over-split, the knees extended and the feet pointed. She seemed to be stuck in mid-air, frozen in time. It was dark in the theatre, the lights dimmed but for emergency exits and stage lights.

The stage itself – lit brightly, empty but for the dancer leaping gracefully – seemed like an entirely different world. It painted a stunning picture, the dancer in her pure white dress, the skirt see-through to show her long legs, alone in the black box that was the stage. The light reflected off her costume, her skin. She was ethereal.

She kept feeling those eyes on her. Predatory.

She no longer only felt watched. She felt hunted. Someone was after her.

She started to run.

This needs to be preserved, I thought, this beauty. It should be plastered all over the world, every wall, every phone or TV or computer, everywhere. The black and white contrast, the skirt, flying up around her waist, the elegantly raised arms. It should be kept forever. Then, just a second later, it was over. Gravity had decided to set in again. The dancer landed gracefully, continuing her way over the stage, before sinking down into a deep bow.

'Brava!' I shouted, 'Brava!'

I stood up, giving her the applause she deserved. Yes, I decided, I would save this moment. Preserve it. Forever.

She ran faster. Turned around to see if the shadow was still behind her. Thought better of it and kept running.

She needed to get away. She hadn't seen who it was that was after her, but she knew they were there.

Following.

Hunting.

I got to work immediately after the performance, gathering materials. White fabric, the softest I could find. Nails, small ones, as to not distract from the picture.

When she felt a hand on her shoulder, she screamed. She kept fighting but the figure was stronger than her. She kept fighting, kept struggling, even when she fell down and hit her head.

I can't let them win, she thought.

I won't go down without a fight.

The next step was sketching out a pose. Based on my memory of that night, framed by stage lights and bowing red curtains.

Not the pictures the newspaper printed. They could never capture her glory.

Her power.

Not the way I could.

She watched her blood soak into the fabric of her clothes. Saw the figure watching her. Manic. Obsessive.

'Don't worry,' they said, 'I am prepared. It will be perfect.'

She tried to crawl away, but couldn't find the strength.

'This one is just for me,' she heard the figure say. The soft touch of hands on her waist was the last thing she felt before unconsciousness.

Yes, I decided, this was the way it needed to be. Arms above her head, eyes closed, legs stretched out.

My plans don't always work out. But this one did. My finest work yet.

It wouldn't be seen all over the world, I decided. They didn't deserve to see this.

This was only for me.

It looked as if she was floating. Her arms were stretched above her head, her eyes closed and her head thrown back. Her legs were stretched in an almost inhuman over-split, the knees extended and the feet pointed. She seemed to be stuck in mid-air, frozen in time.

That was the way they found her, days later.

Floating, held up by chains.

Preserved forever.



Liebe

a poem by Sylvie Akouvi Essenam Adjeoda

Lieben wir einander, weil jeder in seinem Herzen weint.

Innigkeit sei unsere Haltung zueinander, weil wir uns nur für eine kurze
Zeit treffen.

Ewig muss in unseren Herzen die Liebe leuchtend bleiben, weil wir alle
davon so träumen.

Beständig sollen wir uns dann dafür einsetzen, denn unser Stolz ver-
achtet
sie.

Energisch vertreten wir die **LIEBE**, denn sie ist der einzig wahre Schrei
unserer Zeit.

Leben

a poem by Sylvie Akouvi Essenam Adjeoda

Lächle an das Leben, und es lächelt dir zurück.

Erwarte von niemandem, und du wirst immer dankbar sein.

Biete dich den anderen gern an, und du wirst erstaunlicherweise auch
bedient.

Erhoffe die Träume, an denen du fleißig arbeitest, und sie werden si-
cher
erfüllt.

Nimmer Gutes aufhören, denn nur so gelingt uns alles im **LEBEN**.

Between the Tides

a short story by Katrin Stamm

Seated upon the weathered landing stage, the setting sun behind me, I watched the quiet transformations of the sea. After a hot and sweltering day, a few lingering swimmers still enjoyed the waters' cool embrace, occasionally darting to evade the stinging jellyfish, that drifted lazily beneath the surface – all while the sea exhaled its tangy breath of salt and seaweed. At last, the sun vanished behind the park's silhouetted treetops, pursued by the wind that forever chases her across the globe. A new swarm of white jellyfish, like ghostly messengers, heralded the arrival of the waves the wind had overtaken on its chase, which now began to break upon the shore. The undulating surface of the water caught my gaze: the waves, rebounding from the shore, were rushing towards the horizon, grey smoke on black and glassy liquid, skimming over obsidian waters, rolling the opposite direction, towards the shore – leaving myself suspended in between the tides, advancing and retreating simultaneously, in limbo. As wind and waves gradually softened, strange, mesmerizing hues began to bloom upon the surface of the sea. The rushing swirls of smoke, riding the liquid glass, slowly stilled into pools, spilling into each other, mingling with molten silver islands, each rimmed in gold – reflections of the sun's aurelian afterglow. Then, suddenly, a cool breeze brushed across my face, the harbinger of night, ending my reverie, reminding me that it was time to head back home.

Stand Up

an artwork by Catalin Tirlea



Dead Lovers

a poem by Wienke Niedermanner

Relief.

An arrow in peaceful relief
hit the one whose nose followed great glory 'fore grief
made his arms throw his weapons, his trademark, away,
so relief marked his trade, sent him peace, let him lay.
No hero was happy, he died in a smile,
His heart, after aching, rejoiced one last time.

Nostalgia.

Tears of nostalgia have run
down his fairly fair cheeks, when he held him so clung
to the heart that's been loved and had loved further more
than another had ever, except which he mourned.
Two shadows that waited for fate to be done,
Break their silence like clouds let break through the sun.

Dancing

excerpts from a novel project by Jule Heyen

Content warnings may apply. Please check page 123 for more information.

A collection of moments between two characters.

I

*Just like a melody that lingers on
You seem to haunt me night and day*

‘No, the other way!’

I tried turning the other way, but in doing so forgot to switch my feet and stumbled, barely catching myself on the desk. I could hear Lucy giggle behind me and turned around to glare at her.

‘See? I told you it was hopeless.’

After Lucy had dragged me up to the attic and plugged in my father’s radio, she had tried to teach me the steps to a waltz. I, however, still hadn’t seemed to gain any talent for it since my last sad attempts at dance classes.

‘Nothing is hopeless. Look, like this!’ Lucy, once again, demonstrated the steps. One step back, then one to the right, close the legs. One to the front, to the left, and closing them again.

I sighed and got in position again. Looking at Lucy on my right, I could mimic what she was doing. But as soon as she stopped to watch me, I got lost again, mixing up the steps. Frustrated, I stepped back and sat down on the old couch. A cloud of dust sprang up in the air when I did, and I angrily waved my hand in front of my face to make it dissipate. Lucy stopped to kneel in front of me.

‘Hey, don’t give up. We’ve only just started.’

‘Yeah, and I can’t even manage to remember the simplest steps. It looks so easy when you do it.’

‘It’s just practice. As soon as you understand the steps, it’ll be easy for you as well. Unless you give up now, of course.’ Lucy got up, putting her hands on her waist and studying me with a slight frown. I tried not to focus on the way it made her nose crease, and the flutter that caused in my stomach. Instead, I wiped the sweat off my face and looked to the side, avoiding her eyes. After a moment of silence, Lucy stepped back towards the desk with the radio on it. I watched her as she switched the dial back and forth, apparently with a specific frequency in mind. She made a cute little squealing noise as soon as she found it, turning around with a bright smile and stepping back towards me.

‘Alright, get up. I have an idea.’ She grabbed my arms and pulled me up off the sofa, then positioned me in the centre of the room and offered me her hands.

‘We’ll learn it together. That’s much easier anyway, I don’t know why I didn’t think of it sooner.’

‘What?’

‘I’ll dance the man’s part. Then you have a partner to lead. No need to remember which direction to go, that’s my job. Also, everything’s easier with music.’ She smiled at me and gestured for me to take her hands.

‘Lucy-’

‘Come on, just give it a try!’ She gave up on gesturing and just grabbed my hands. ‘This one,’ she took my right hand into hers, ‘is laid down on top of my left hand. The other one,’ – she took my left hand and placed it on her shoulder, ‘stays here.’

As her curls fell onto my hand, I was suddenly uncomfortably aware of how close we were. Then, as if sensing my feelings, she stepped even closer, gently setting her right hand on my waist, and I closed my eyes.

‘Relax,’ she whispered, her breath warm on my face, ‘You only need to follow what I’m doing.’

When I opened my eyes again, she was looking directly at me, only a few centimetres separating us. Her dark eyes were full of warmth and something else, something I couldn’t – or didn’t dare to – name. I slowly started shaking my head.

‘Just give it a try.’ She tried convincing me once again, just as another song started.

I took a breath, before I finally nodded. Lucy’s smile got wider and she paused, listening to the song.

‘Okay, five, six, seven, eight.’ Then she took a step forward with her right leg, nudging my left leg back. I tried to remember the steps.

As if sensing my troubles, she began narrating. ‘Step to the side, close the legs. To the front, side, together. Again: back, side, together. Front, side, together.’

And slowly, oh so slowly, the steps began to sink in. She had been right – it was a lot easier to remember where to go with a partner leading me. She effortlessly mirrored my steps, nudging me in the right direction. The less I had to concentrate on stepping in the right direction at the right time, the more I could actually hear the music. And before I knew it, the song ended. I was almost sad when Lucy took a step back.

‘See, you can dance. You only had to try.’ Her smile was addictive.

‘That could have been worse, at least.’ I conceded.

‘I knew it, you had fun!’ She bumped her shoulder into mine. ‘Don’t try to hide it. I’ll make a dancer out of you yet.’

‘Well, maybe not a dancer,’ I started, before she once again bumped her shoulder into mine. ‘But maybe a casual enjoyer.’ I grinned at her, as a new song started.

Gathering my courage, I offered her my hand.

‘Would you give me this dance, milady?’

Giggling, she accepted my hand.

‘It would be an honour.’

*I never realized till you had gone
How much I cared about you*

I was lying on my bed trying and failing to focus on my book when I heard the music. Immediately, my eyes filled with tears. It was coming from my father's study. The same song Lucy and I had danced to just last week. And now? Now she was gone.

'What are you doing?'

I startled, so engrossed in my book I hadn't heard Lucy enter my room.

'Reading.'

'No, I can see that. I mean, what are you doing here? It's time for your weekly dance lesson.'

'I wasn't aware that was a weekly occurrence now.'

'Of course it is, silly. How else would you learn? Practice makes perfect and all that.'

I groaned. 'You're really going to make me do this every week?'

'Every week.' She grinned. 'Come on, don't pretend you didn't also have fun.'

I turned towards her and sighed.

'Alright, this one time.'

'Yeah, you keep telling yourself that.'

Before I knew it, our spontaneous attic dance lessons had indeed become weekly occurrences. Lucy would come to my room and pull me up to the attic. Then she'd go back to get the radio, before searching for a channel that played dance music all night long. And, despite doing my best to pretend otherwise, I was having fun. It felt almost illegal what we were doing, as many things with Lucy did. But, for the first time in my life, I didn't mind breaking the rules. It was exhilarating, doing something prohibited. And I would break every law, if it meant Lucy would smile at me like she did when we were alone.

'Ow!'

'You should know by now that I can't dance.'

'Okay, but could you be just a little bit more careful?' Despite her chiding words, Lucy was laughing.

'I'm not sure I can. I have no idea what I'm doing.'

'You must have had a terrible teacher.'

'Oh no, she was great. Very patient. I'm just a lost case in regards to dancing.'

She laughed and pulled me closer again. She was trying to teach me turns, and I was, predictably, awful at remembering which way to turn. Her catching me with her hand firm on my waist if I stumbled – and the way that made my brain malfunction – wasn't helping me progress either.

'Step back, to the side, together. Front, to the side, together. Now, turn to the right and step back.'

I managed to complete one turn without stumbling and placed my hand on her shoulder again, giving her a wide grin as we fell back into the base step. She smiled back at me.

'See, you got it. It's not that hard, is it? Again, to the side, feet together. And turn to the right.'

This time, I almost made it, before my foot got stuck in the carpet we had put down to muffle our steps. Before I could fall, Lucy caught me once again. This time, however, she didn't let go or step away. Instead she pulled me even closer, pressing our chests together. My breath caught in my chest.

'I'm almost starting to think you're doing this on purpose.'

'I just can't help falling for you.' She giggled at that, pressing her face into my neck.

'Shut up.' But I could feel her smile on my neck. Her breath was ghosting over my cheek as she moved to look at me. When she kissed me, my eyes fluttered closed and our lesson was forgotten.

I turned around and buried my head in my pillow. I didn't want to think about Lucy, but I seemed to barely do anything else these days. It had been two weeks since she left and I was missing her every second of every day. My nights, if I managed to get at least a few hours of sleep, were haunted by dreams of her. Nightmares, replaying the fight we had

and the cold, empty feeling of watching her leave. Even worse were the seemingly happy ones, of all the secret moments we shared. They left me aching for her, my whole body hurting for something I couldn't have. Something I threw away. I pressed my eyes together, hoping to forget, but all I saw in the darkness was her face as she was leaving.

I can't live without you

3

All alone

I'm so all alone

It was mesmerising to watch. She stood tall on stage, still as she sang the first notes. I barely registered the song, barely understood the words. My eyes were fixed on her. Lucy. The pink sequins reflected the stage lights and drew patterns of light onto her skin. The movement of her chest with every breath switched up the pattern. As she switched to the chorus, she started to move. With a cocky smile, she switched the leg that was stretched out, then drew a circle onto the floor with her foot. Even from the back of the room where I was standing, I could see the sequins of her dress getting stuck in her stockings, but she either didn't notice or didn't care. Her arms drew hypnotic patterns through the air, her body following as if some invisible thread was pulling her

forward. She was glowing. Tall and beautiful and an electric mix of shy and charming that pulled me in like a moth to the flame. She'd always said she was the born performer, meant to be on stage. She'd always known and now she'd reached her dream. You could almost feel her commanding the entire room with her presence. She was happy like this: Her eyes seemed brighter; her smile more honest. This was where she was meant to be.

There is no one else but you

All alone

I was suddenly reminded of all the times I saw her dancing through the garden; spinning, jumping, dancing to music only she could hear. Late at night with a scarf wrapped around her shoulders or in the bright midday sun on grass by the lake. She was always so carefree with her joy, always showing it, always sharing it. As I kept watching her, two things became increasingly clear. This dazzling life was hers to live. And there was no space for me anymore.

I'm all alone every evening

All alone feeling blue

*Just for a moment you were mine, and then
You seemed to vanish like a dream*

‘Would you give me this dance, Milady?’

I startled, hearing Lucy’s voice behind me all of a sudden. I took a breath and turned around.

‘I’m honoured you’d want to, but I’m afraid I’m not much of a dancer. I’ll spend more time stepping on your toes than around them.’ I was immediately annoyed by my own formality. This was Lucy. Even after everything, no matter how different she seemed. I still knew her. I should still know her.

‘That’s okay, I’m quite fearless in that regard.’ She smiled at me and once again offered her hand. ‘It all depends on who’s leading anyway, just follow me.’

I hesitated. Lucy, of course, didn’t relent.

‘What are you still afraid of? This isn’t your little village. No one knows you. No one cares.’ The last words came with a kindness that I was unused to hearing from Lucy. She was always all bite, full of scathing sarcastic comments and bitter remarks. But when I looked into her eyes, I saw her. My Lucy. Then and there I decided, that I was done with hiding, done with blending in, done with being afraid of who I was. When I smiled at her, she grabbed my hand and pulled me onto the dance floor.

With the other couples surrounding us, it was as if we were in our own world, completely hidden away. Everything else seems to fall into

the background. The music became a distant rush in my ears, the bright lights blending together as a backdrop for Lucy and the smile she gave me. All my senses seemed to focus on was her: where our skin touched, her smile, the sparkle in her eyes. In that moment, I felt like I was finally in the right spot. This was where I was meant to be. With her. Everything else wasn't important.

I knew then and there it would be a bad idea to get lost in the fantasy of normalcy. The idea that we could actually be together, in public, dancing. It was too tempting to give up and therefore so, so dangerous. I could get used to it. I would get used to it. And it would be unbearable to step back into the shadows, to go back into hiding. But Lucy? She never saw it this way. She was always in favour of living your life to the fullest, whenever and wherever you got the chance to.

'What are you thinking about?' Her voice pulled me out of my thoughts. I glanced up at her. We were basically the same height, but with her heels she was a few centimetres taller.

'Nothing, really.' My usual response, still, after all these years. I didn't think for a second that she'd believe me.

'Nothing, huh?' She laughed. 'I can basically feel you worrying. It really is fine.'

'I know. It's just...' I hesitated. 'I'll get used to it. To this.' To you with me. 'I don't want to hide again.'

I wonder where you are

And how you are

And if you are all

Alone too

5

I long to hold you in my arms again

My life is very lonely

For I want you only

‘I want to go dancing.’

I looked up from the book I was reading to glance at Lucy, lying in her bed. I’d spent the day here with her, trying to keep her company. She wasn’t taking her sudden lack of freedom very well.

‘You shouldn-’

‘Yeah, I know. I shouldn’t go out. I’m just...’ She huffed. ‘I’m just really, really bored.’ She paused for a second, then continued. ‘It’s not fair to complain, I know. Not your fault. But I’m getting so tired of sitting around all day.’

I put my book down, and took a second to consider. ‘Let’s dance, then’. I said, coming to a decision. I got up from the chair and reaching my hand out to help her up.

‘What?’

‘Dancing? That thing you love?’

‘No, I know what dan- shut up.’ She frowned when she saw my grin. ‘You said I shouldn’t go out. And you’re not exactly a rule breaker, are you?’

‘We don’t need to go out to dance.’ I turned to the radio on the dresser and started looking for a channel. ‘A bit of movement would do you well, I think.’

‘You think?’ She still sounded hesitant, but she was slowly starting to get off the bed.

‘Your spirit, if nothing else.’ I found a channel and turned to grin at her. ‘And my nerves. If I have to sit here listening to you mope for another day, I will go mad.’

‘Hey!’ But I saw her trying to hide a small smile.

We were swaying mostly in place due to the limited floor space of her room. She had her head on my shoulder, bending her neck in weird ways, and her eyes closed. In that moment, I knew, just as all the times we were dancing, that it couldn’t last. That it wouldn’t last. She tired quickly, these last tough weeks, and I knew it would get worse still. But I also knew that, if she let me, I would spend every last moment right here. Dancing. With her.

I wonder where you are (remember me)

And how you are (remember me)

And if you are (I love you) all

Alone (I love you) too

Lyrics from All Alone by Irving Berlin, sung by Doris Day.

Crimson Lakes

a poem by Wienke Niedermanner

I wash my hands in innocence and sanity,
You bathe yours wet in reckless, tense profanity,
Cut off the laughs we once had so joyously,
I wash my hands in innocence and loyalty.

Go on and plot my death like you can't wait to grieve,
Forget-me-nots are placed around my bed beneath,
I hope you gather courage to move past your crime,
And past our town, before you are condemned this time.

I wash my hands in innocence and empathy,
Your vest is soaked with crimson lakes you take from me,
You leave the scene as if you never cared for me,
You wash your hands in ignorance, unfaithfully.

Rumstadt

a poem by Timm Wynchhoff

Content warnings may apply. Please check page 123 for more information.

Morgens zur Plantage.

Hacken, bücken, schleppen, schwitzen,
klagen, seufzen, stöhnen, ächzen.

Dann: schreien, leiden, bluten, flehen. Krepieren.

Beraubt, zermürbt, ein Niemand sein.

Schlafen. 4 Stunden. Dann aufstehen.

Dann morgens zur Plantage.

Morgens zur Fabrik.

Nähen, sticken.

Ein mickriger Junge, abgemagert, barfuß im toxischen Gemisch. Nä-
hen,

sticken.

Hunderte kleine Mädchen für Stunden auf Knien, als Belohnung: fast

nichts.

Nähen, sticken.

Auf einmal: Feuer. Panik. Flucht.

Dann: Schreie, Leid und endlich Tod. Tote. Tote überall.

Schlafen. 4 Stunden. Dann aufstehen.

Dann morgens zur Fabrik.

New Waves on the Shore

a poem by Hanna Bünning

The waves come crashing down
And with each wave passing through,
Silent, tender, clear and blue,
The next wave builds on top
Again and again, never rushing to stop.

The waves come crashing down
Clearing every footprint left behind,
The things that once were
Are now only in our mind, forgotten.
If only we had stopped to care.

The waves come crashing down
As I see the memories of my loved ones passing by,
The fear of losing them, the when and why,
Letting go of something or someone
Hoping for return, feeling undone.

The waves come crashing down
And I remember the time we spent together,
I always thought nothing could separate us, our forever,
Everything seems so distant now
Like we are miles apart, and I wonder how.

The waves come crashing down,
We cannot change fate
How we feel is up to us, because no one can relate,
We live through good and bad
And even when we were going through our worst,
We miss what we had.

The waves come crashing down
Forcing us to change
To let go, by snatching everything from us
Leaving us no choice but to hold on,
Taking everything out of our hands.

As the waves come crashing down,
Leaving us with nothing,
We have to accept that it takes
Or we will drown,
Leaving us empty, hollow
Longing for the past.

5 vor 12

a poem by Jacob Frederik Horn

Die Melancholie droht, ihn zu ersticken,
drum reißt er die Augen auf.
Seine Seele ein Teppich voller Flicker
und wieder blickt er hinauf.
In das unbekannte Schwarze,
hier und da erhellt.
So bedeutungslos sein Leben,
so bedeutungslos die Welt.
Die Nachtluft füllt durch den Filter seine Lungen,
kurz ist er eins mit sich.
In der Ferne Grillen-Zirpen,
von der Dunkelheit umschlungen.
Das Karussell – es hielt für fünf Minuten an.
Ein kleines bisschen Frieden für den alten Mann.

Schwertsarbeit

a comic by Lasse Sörensen



Family

a poem by Jacob Frederik Horn

I bet you a grand that y'all know that saying:

This and that runs in the family.

It runs in my family too.

In my family everybody runs.

They all run from themselves.

A stop here,

a stop there.

Refilling the tanks.

A glass of forgetting.

Then they run again.

Ein besonderes Erlebnis

a short story by Sylvie Akouvi Essenam Adjeoda

„Hallo, herzlich willkommen“, begrüßte er mich, als ich eines Abends in unser Wohngebäude zurückkehrte.

Ich kam nach einem langen Arbeitstag von der Universität zurück. Er begrüßte mich von einem Stockwerk aus und danach kam er mir die Treppe hinunter entgegen.

Er war ein sehr freundlicher junger Mann. Er wollte meinen Rucksack nehmen, um mir den Weg zu meiner Tür zu erleichtern.

„Ich bin in Ihrer Klasse“, sagte er mir mit einem schönen Lächeln.

Etwas erstaunt drehte ich mich um, um ihn besser betrachten zu können.

Die Kurse haben erst gerade vor vier Wochen begonnen. Ich hatte ihn noch nie in der Klasse bemerkt. Es waren doch recht viele in meinen Klassen, meine Studierenden, mindestens fünfzig an der Zahl. Vielleicht ist das der Grund, dachte ich ...

Als wir vor meiner Tür ankamen, unterhielten wir uns eine Weile. Am Ende tauschten wir unsere Kontakte aus.

Das war der Beginn einer pathetischen, aber auch sehr spannenden Geschichte.

~

Wir befanden uns am Anfang des Frühlings.

Es war ein Jahr, in dem ich mir eigentlich versprochen hatte, sehr fröhlich zu sein. Ich hatte mit meinen Studierenden einige recht unterhaltsame Veranstaltungen organisiert, wobei wir Lieder vorbereitet und choreografisch aufgeführt hatten. Schöne Melodien zu singen und sich in Harmonie miteinander gemäß ihrem Rhythmus zu bewegen – das ist eine meiner Traumwelten. Wir hatten unsere Aufführungen in einem Video filmisch aufgezeichnet und dokumentiert und hatten viel Freude daran, diese mit den Studierenden der Abteilung zu teilen. Unsere Universität hat Campusse in verschiedenen Städten. Wir hatten also Exkursionen organisiert, um die Studierenden und Lehrkräfte der anderen Campusse zu entdecken, kennenzulernen und uns mit ihnen auszutauschen. Unerwartete Interviews da und dort, angenehme Überraschungskontakte hier, die verschiedenen Fotos, die wir gemacht haben, zeigen immer noch, wie glücklich wir waren ... Neben unseren wichtigen beruflichen und akademischen Verpflichtungen mussten wir auch mal aus dem Alltag ausbrechen.

Ich erinnere mich noch an das erste Gespräch mit ihm, an seine Ruhe und sein Lächeln. Er wirkte wie ein junger Student, der einigermaßen motiviert war, Französisch zu lernen. Er erzählte mir, dass er während seiner Schulzeit einmal bei seinem Onkel in Frankreich Urlaub gemacht hatte, aber noch nicht fließend Französisch spricht und gerne Fortschritte in dieser Richtung machen würde. Ich hatte den Wunsch in mir gehabt, ihn bei der Umsetzung seines Ziels zu unterstützen und bot ihm meine Hilfe an, falls er sie brauchen sollte.

~

Es war mir wichtig, ihn während meiner nächsten Sitzung mit seiner Klasse zu sehen. Jetzt, da ich mit ihm einmal sprechen durfte, war es leichter, ihn in der Klasse zu erkennen. Er befand sich unter denjenigen in der hinteren Reihe. Genau wie bei den anderen Studierenden musste ich ihn zweimal ansprechen, um Fragen zu beantworten. Ich konnte diesen jungen Mann nicht mehr vergessen.

Ich verstand dieses Gefühl jedoch nicht und versuchte, es zu ignorieren, als eines Morgens jemand an meine Tür klopfte.

„Wer ist das?“, reagierte ich.

„Ich bin es. Léo.“

Mein Herz sprang auf, als seine Stimme erklang. Ich öffnete die Tür und sah ihm ins Gesicht ... Er stand bereit, um mich zu treffen ...

„Guten Tag, Frau Luther“, sagte er mit einem Lächeln. „Ich fühle mich heute nicht sehr gut. Aber ich würde gerne zuerst Ihren Kurs besuchen und danach ins Krankenhaus gehen, um mich behandeln zu lassen. Und da ich auf dem Weg zur Universität bin, wollte ich sehen, ob Sie bereit sind, dass wir zusammen gehen.“

In diesem Moment war ich noch auf meinen Beinen, aber ich fing an, den Verstand zu verlieren, ohne es wahrgenommen zu haben. Ich war verliebt.

Ich fand seine Geste in der Tat sehr lieb und bewundernswert. Ich war noch mit den Vorbereitungen beschäftigt. Ich ließ ihn also in die Wohnung und bat ihn, auf mich zu warten.

Zufall! ... In der Tat war auch ich nicht gesund und plante deshalb, mich nach meinem Unterricht im Krankenhaus behandeln zu lassen.

Die Universität war nur drei Fahrminuten von unserem Wohngebäude entfernt. Auf dem Weg zur Universität hatten wir ein nettes und amüsanter Gespräch über eine Klassenaktivität geführt, die sich auf die Aufführung eines französischen Animationsfilms bezog, den ich sie hatte vorbereiten lassen.

Nach dem Unterricht gingen wir gemeinsam zur Klinik unserer Universität. Durch die Kraft des Windes fiel ihm ein Stück Papier aus der Hand. Und da ich neben ihm stand, eilte ich hin, um es aufzuheben und ihm zu geben, als ich sein Alter entdeckte, das darauf geschrieben stand. Er war in der Tat ein sehr junger Mann. Er war nur 19 Jahre alt. Mit Kummer stellte ich fest, wie groß der Altersunterschied zwischen uns war: Ich war 33 Jahre alt ...

Fortsetzung folgt...

Gleis im Nirgendwo

a poem by Jacob Frederik Horn

Hier vermag der Himmel mir kein Licht zu schenken.

Umrahmt von vergilbten Anzeigetafeln und flackernden Neonschildern

bin ich der

Fluchtpunkt in einer Schmiererei.

Nur der Dreck zeugt noch von Leben.

In naher Ferne heult der Motor eines geleasten Autos bayrischen

Herstellers.

In näherer Ferne heult ein ewig Gestrandeter.

The Walker in the Wheat

an excerpt from a novel project by Luc Salinger

Chapter 1

Anona looked at the sea of wheat stalks that stretched beyond the horizon. It looked like a never-ending ocean of honeyed up grass. With each gust of wind, a ripple went through the field, turning the stalks into warm flowing waves, each of the strands moving in harmony. They were sending a message with their soft rustles. The promise, whispered through a waft of flour: Anona and her family will never grow hungry.

‘In the field, where the wheat is tall,’ the breeze murmured, echoing a nursery rhyme from her childhood. She had heard it often as a kid; it was stitched into her mind. Her mother had sung it by her bed. ‘There’s a creature who hides from all ...’

Within the never-ending field, a small village lay nestled where Anona, her parents and her parents’ parents had lived. A small pond served as their water source alongside an ancient well. Everyone that resided in the small meadow was aware of their tasks and every day was a cycle that nobody broke out of. Someone had to cut some wheat and turn it into bread. The others could do whatever they wanted. Life was simple and easy.

Anona’s eyes lay fixed on the field, her feet dangling from the front porch. The little rustles it made with the soft breeze of wind almost

sounded like a beckoning call. Almost as if the wheat stalks called her name. Anona, Anona, Anona ...

‘You coming in?’ her father yelled from the inside of their little cottage.

She hesitated. The fields wanted her to stay, wanting to pull her in. The melody lingered in her mind. *Don’t look back*, the stalks sang. *Stay on track*.

With one last look at the grain, Anona turned to her father who held the wooden door open for her.

‘What’s on the menu?’ she asked and hoisted herself up. She walked through the door and into the house, where her mother, grandfather and little brother sat around the table.

‘Bread.’ Her father said and shut the door.

On the table sat a big steaming loaf of bread that the whole family except Anona and her father admired.

‘What a sight,’ her brother Samuel said, his mouth almost watering in anticipation like a dog tempted with a treat. Short, meek and blond, he could barely control himself from getting his little hands on the loaf.

‘A true delight!’ Anona’s mother said, folding her hands that were covered in rings. She ripped a piece of the bread and gave it to Samuel, who proceeded to suckle on it as if it were a pacifier. ‘This one turned out exceptionally well, I felt it with my hands.’ She rubbed the excess flour off her fingertips.

‘You’re absolutely right!’ Anona’s father pulled a chair back and gestured to Anona to take a seat. He sat down at the head of the table and readied his voice. ‘The stalks were an easy harvest today. What a nice change of pace.’ He let out a hearty laugh and tore into the loaf, ripping out a chunk.

It made a crackling sound as he pierced his finger through the golden-brown crust. The crumb looked impeccable. The way in which it separated from the rest of the bread was a testament to its airy, soft, and tender nature. The colour was creamy, and Anona could see an array of air pockets in the soft texture. It looked perfect; hot and ready to be eaten.

As the family eagerly enjoyed the loaf, Anona sat there, averting her eyes, not eating. Her mother tore off one piece and held it to Anona’s nose. The smell of the lightly roasted crust and the crumb’s rich earthy scent made her roll her eyes.

‘I don’t want it.’ She murmured, gently moving her mother’s hand away.

‘Darling, it’s your favourite.’ Her mother looked at her with dejected eyes. ‘What’s wrong?’ Slowly, she rolled the piece of bread she held out to her daughter between her fingers, making it into a doughy little ball.

‘I’m just...’ She felt herself growing hotter. ‘Tired of eating bread all day.’

Samuel, astonished, tried to console his sister through his hearty chews. 'The bread tastes amazing, Anona. Really, like always. You'll love it.'

'Yeah, like always...' She rubbed the side of her arm. 'I wish that there was something else besides stupid bread that we could eat once in a while. Don't you feel the same, Sam?'

Before Samuel could answer, their mother laid both of her own hands on the table and stood up. 'Easy now, young lady. Your father works hard every day so that we can relish its taste. Bread is what keeps us going. It's what we have and what the land here gives us. I don't want anyone in this house to be ungrateful about all of this.'

Anona could feel herself get hotter and hotter. Her leg started to bounce, and her palms felt shaky. No matter how often she let her hands run over her own arm, she couldn't rid herself of the feeling of trepidation she began to experience.

'You want me to be grateful for chewing on bread every day? Want me to think that bread is life, and I should be happy grinding my own life between my teeth? Sorry, but I'm really sick of it. This can't be the only thing that life has to offer. There must be something beyond the village that we just can't see.'

At that moment, grandfather's head jerked up a little. 'Watch your tongue!' he said in a raspy, hoarse tone, his voice riddled with anger. 'The fields don't take kindly to those who don't appreciate what they

offer and neither does your family. Honour the bread, honour the fields, and most definitely, honour your family, your roots!’

‘My roots?’ Anona clenched her jaw. ‘Roots are only holding you in the dirt! Wheat can only be turned into something worthwhile if you cut it free.’ She stood up, slamming her palms on the wooden table. ‘And I think I’m the same. If I keep holding onto my roots, if I stay here with you, my life is worthless.’

‘Darling ...’ her mother hesitantly tried to put her hand on Anona’s but ultimately couldn’t do it. ‘We still are a family, we have to stick together. We don’t have anything but ourselves. It’s not that I don’t trust you,’ she tried her best to force a light tone, ‘I do trust you, but once you leave, nobody knows what could happen. We have stayed here because we know it to be safe.’ She takes Anona’s hand now. ‘I don’t want to lose you darling. I know it may seem that way, but please don’t see yourself as a prisoner here. You-’

Anona’s father cut his wife off. ‘No, that is exactly what she thinks, isn’t that right? Anona, the poor little prisoner. If you really think that little of our village, our family, and you want to get rid of us like we are chaff, then...’ He slammed his fist on the table and the plate where the half-eaten loaf sat shook, making a faint clanging noise. ‘Then...’ Her father breathed in deeply, trying to hide the pain in his voice, huffing, not able to continue.

‘Don’t say something you will regret,’ his wife softly whispered. She looked over to Anona, who seemed on the verge of tears. ‘Darling, you don’t know what’s out there. Please think of what you’d be giving up if you leave. Is it really worth it? For what? There is nothing wrong with staying here.’

‘I heard the field call out to me,’ Anona said, slowly looking up. ‘I have to leave.’

Samuel gulped down his bread. ‘Anona....’ He looked at her, his face puzzled and sad. ‘Please don’t go.’

The grandfather coughed and balled his hand into a fist, holding it to his mouth. ‘I used to think the field called my name too. It’s the wind, Anona. The wind playing little tricks on your mind.’ He chuckled slightly and his hand went limp, flopping to the side of his body. ‘Did you see it today? Is that why you want to leave?’

Anona stood suddenly and he adjusted his position in his chair to look at her. ‘You are safe here. It won’t hurt you if you stay here.’ He waited for a response, but he didn’t get any.

‘Anona?’ he said, but she was now just standing there like a mud effigy, head drooping. ‘Anona?’

‘I’m sorry, I’m sorry everyone.’ She couldn’t look at her family anymore. ‘I’ll go.’

With that, she stormed quickly through the wooden door, hearing the chairs move back once she reached the handle.

‘No, wait!’ her father cried out, but she had already swung the door open.

She cast a final look through the crack of the door and saw her whole family standing up and running towards her. She slammed it shut.

The looming shadow of the cottage darkened the grass before her, but as she looked up, she saw the endless field of wheat again, bathed in the sun’s bright light. As if she had a magnetic heart, something in her chest pulled her closer to the wheat and she couldn’t resist. There it was again. Her legs gave into the light tug and the faint whisper of her name, sent by the wind. Anona ...

She took one step into the wheat and her foot made crunching noises as it flattened a couple of stalks. Taking her other foot into it as well, she was now submerged up to her hips in the plants that had sustained her and her family for all those years. They gently brushed against her thighs, tickling her as if to welcome the newly arrived guest. Anona didn’t look back anymore, even as she heard the faint calls of her family. She went further into the field almost beyond her own desire. It was as if the field itself drew her in. There was only tailwind now and she went deeper and deeper.

As she progressed, she noticed the heads of the wheat didn’t sway with the wind anymore. They moved even in the absence of it, slowly, like worms in unison, rhythmic. They seemed to lean away just as Anona was about to graze them with her leg. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw something move, a blur in the golden pool. She quickly turned her

head in the direction. Upon seeing what had moved and was now staring right at her, she immediately felt her stomach churn and a shiver ran down her spine. There was no air that moved the wheat anymore. Everything was deafeningly silent.

In the field stood a twitching, misshapen figure. It looked like a faint imitation of a human. Its limbs were long and thin, disjointed as if it had been broken at every inch. The skin of the creature was a mix of textures, seemingly sewn together in hasty fashion, like there wasn't enough skin to make a human so someone had to sew it to pieces of cloth and leather.

The face looked like a nightmare. For eyes, two hollow sockets with an orange glow, reminiscent of the fading light of a sunset, and a small open ridge for a nose. What made Anona almost faint was the mouth. Wide, smiling from ear to ear with cracked, bleeding lips and sharp yellow, almost golden teeth that were embalmed in a thin layer of dirt. It looked like it was wearing a wig, poorly constructed out of straw, poking in all directions.

Its chest slowly heaved as if it was breathing, but out of its wide-open mouth, the only sound that came out was a bloodcurdling rendition of the rustling of wheat stalks, the ones that Anona had heard all of her life. She stared at the creature that grinned at her, still twitching. Anona herself was too scared to twitch even the tiniest muscle.

In the Field, where the wheat is tall

*There is a creature who hides from all
With hollow eyes, the kindest grin
Waits for those who wander in.*

*On and on, through the rows
Careful where the tall grass grows
Don't look back, stay on track
Walk until the sky turns black.*

*Careful now, hang on tight
Think he has you in his sight
Run away, through the grain
Run until your legs feel pain.*

*The wheat and chaff, intertwined
Seek a soul they're yet to find
Walk with him, through the land
He'll take you by his brittle hand.*

Paule

a short story by Karlotta Harms

Content warnings may apply. Please check page 123 for more information.

„Hörst du mich?“, er klingt schon wieder genervt, dabei steht nicht er, sondern ich vor der riesigen Backwarenabteilung mit einem unleserlichen Einkaufszettel in der Hand. Woher soll ich bitte wissen, welches Gebäck seine Männer mögen und welches nicht? Ich stoße einen langen Seufzer aus, um meine Fassung zu bewahren. „Ich kann dich sehr wohl hören. Ich habe mich bewusst entschieden, dir nicht zu antworten“, zische ich in den Hörer. „Ich muss Paule gleich von der Schule abholen, also kannst du mir jetzt bitte sagen, was du brauchst? Sonst fahre ich wieder und du kannst den Scheiß allein besorgen!“ Ich gebe zu, nicht aus der Fassung zu geraten, hört sich anders an, aber was soll’s. Jedenfalls hat es Früchte getragen, denn er rückte endlich mit der verdammten Liste an Backwaren raus, die ich zu besorgen hatte. Ich beende das Telefonat, da mein Gespräch mit dem Handy wohl doch mehr Aufsehen erregt hat, als mir lieb ist. Ein Blick auf die Uhr verrät mir, dass keine Zeit zum Stöbern bleibt, also drängele ich mich an den anderen, in Ruhe schlenderten Käufern vorbei zur Kasse. Die Schlange war lang, aber ich hatte Glück, dass ein ziemlich junger, netter Kerl kassiert hat und dies in einem akzeptablen Tempo. Trotz dessen piept meine Uhr, aber ich

schenke ihr keinerlei Beachtung. Paulina muss heute noch zum Tanzen und der Zeitplan war jetzt bereits eng getaktet. Zu spät an der Schule zu sein, war also keine Option. Ich eile so schnell ich kann zu meinem Wagen, den ich glücklicherweise nahe dem Eingang geparkt hatte und fahre, mit den Backwaren beladen, los. Mein Kopf hämmerte und auch die blöde Uhr meldete sich wieder zu Wort. Ich musste mich endlich beruhigen. Ich fuhr auf den Parkplatz der Schule und mir kamen zum Glück etliche Schüler entgegen, die ähnlich spät dran waren wie ich. Ich griff nach der Schultasche, die durch die turbulente und hitzige Autofahrt auf dem Boden gelandet ist und legte einen kurzen, aber effektiven Sprint zum Klassenraum hin. Auf die Minute genau! Ein kleiner Sie-geschrei entfuhr mir und ich blickte mich verlegen nach Augenzeugen meines Ausbruchs um. Aber es schenkte mir niemand auch nur jegliche Beachtung. Ich betrat den Klassenraum und stellte erleichtert fest, dass auch der Lehrer noch nicht zu sehen war. Ich ließ mich entspannt auf meinen Sitz gleiten, da wurde ich im nächsten Moment auch schon wieder hochgezogen. Ein sehr hübsches, junges Mädchen, mit langen, braunen Locken stand mir gegenüber. Ihre faszinierenden grünen Augen bohrten sich in meine und hielten meinen Blick gefangen. Sie hielt mich immer noch mit beiden Händen an meinen Oberarmen fest und sah beinahe wütend aus. Ich wollte mich gerade bei ihr entschuldigen, weil ich annahm, ihren Platz gestohlen zu haben, als sie ein zuckersüßes Lachen ausstieß und vor Freude quiekte. So langsam fühlte ich mich unangenehm in ihrer Gegenwart. Ich setzte ein verhaltenes Lachen auf

und versuchte, mich ihren Händen zu entziehen. Aus dem Plan wurde nichts, da ich in eine stürmische Umarmung hineingezogen wurde. Während sie mich hin und her drehte, quiekte sie in mein Ohr: „Ich bin so froh, dass du wieder da bist Paule! Aber warum hast du mir nichts erzählt?“ Mein Blut gefror zu Eis und ein seltsames Gefühl kroch meine Wirbelsäule hinauf. Kurz darauf wurde mein Sichtfeld schwarz und ein beißend, helles Licht flog auf mich zu. Das Mädchen entfernte sich ein Stück von mir und in dem Moment, kehrte auch ihr Gesicht wieder vor meine Augen. Der Moment war so schnell vorbei, dass ich mir beinahe eingebildet hätte, er wäre gar nicht da gewesen. Sie hingegen schien nichts von meinem kurzen Ausflug in die bevorstehende Bewusstlosigkeit mitbekommen zu haben, da sie mich noch immer genauso anstrahlte wie vorher. Mir kamen ihre Gesichtszüge seltsam vertraut vor, aber das tat jetzt nichts zur Sache. Wie hatte sie mich gerade genannt? Irgendetwas an ihrem Gesagten hat eine derartige Reaktion meines Körpers hervorgerufen. Aber sie hatte so schrill und laut gesprochen, dass ich Mühe hatte, überhaupt etwas zu verstehen. Ihr Mund öffnete sich, aber ich kam ihr zuvor: „Wie hast du mich gerade genannt?“ Ich weiß nicht, ob es meine kehlige Stimme war oder ob ich so aussah, wie ich mich gerade fühlte, aber ihr Lächeln verblasste binnen Sekunden. Sie schien über meine Frage nachzudenken, wandte sich aber nach wenigen Minuten des Schweigens von mir ab, ging zu ihrem Platz und drehte sich dann noch einmal zu mir um: „Ich bin froh, dass du wieder da bist. Wir schaffen das.“ Sie schenkte mir ein warmherziges Lächeln,

griff nach ihrer Tasche und ging aus der Haustür. Ich stand noch eine Weile wie versteinert im Flur, bis ich mich wieder einigermaßen im Griff hatte. Das war wirklich merkwürdig. Es schwirrten hunderte von Fragen in meinem Kopf, aber ich konnte keine einzige festhalten. Meine Gedanken waren derart vernebelt, dass ich die Fragen, wenn überhaupt, als Schatten vorbeihuschen sah. Mein Kopf schmerzte. Ich hatte wahrscheinlich wieder nicht die Zeit zum Trinken gefunden. Ich schlenderte in Richtung Küche und schenkte mir ein Glas Wasser ein, was ich in einem Zug leertrank. Mein Handy vibrierte und zeigte einen eingehenden Anruf an. Den Namen konnte ich nicht entziffern, aber ich hob trotzdem ab, nicht, dass sich die Schule wieder meldete. „Schatz, kannst du mich hören? Hey,... Hhh...örs...tt“, danach verstummte der namenlose Anrufer. Dieser blöde Empfang in der Küche. Genervt stand ich vom Stuhl auf, um mich ins Wohnzimmer zu begeben. Das Handy an meinem Ohr lauschte ich nach weiteren Wortfetzen des Anrufers. Aber da kam nichts. Die Leitung war tot. Wieso sind manche Menschen so? Wut keimte in mir auf, aber ich versuchte sie schnell wieder zu regulieren. Am Steuer sollte man sich schließlich aufs Fahren konzentrieren. Ich fuhr auf einer im Wald gelegenen Landstraße und weit und breit war kein Autofahrer zu sehen. Moment mal, ich drückte so schnell und hart ich konnte auf die Bremse. Ich war völlig außer Atem und meine Hände zitterten unkontrolliert. Irgendetwas stimmt hier nicht. Wie bin ich im Auto gelandet? War die einzige Frage, die mein verwirrtes Hirn in einen Gedanken umformulieren und greifen konnte. Hektisch sah ich mich

um, nach einem Straßennamen, nach Häusern in der Ferne oder irgendetwas, was mir verriet, dass ich nicht komplett den Verstand verloren hatte. Der Tag heute war schon verwirrend genug, wobei ich mich an vieles nicht erinnern konnte. Aber egal, auch das tut jetzt nichts zur Sache. Die Straße war immer noch menschenleer, mittlerweile zitterte ich am ganzen Körper und hatte das Gefühl, keine Luft mehr zu bekommen. Mein Fluchtinstinkt setzte ein. Ich muss raus aus diesem Auto. Meine Instinkte übernahmen, ich stolperte blind aus dem Auto und landete unsanft auf meiner Hüfte. Ein gleißender Schmerz durchfuhr mich, meine Augen weiteten sich vor Schreck. Ich bin mir sicher, dass ich schrie, aber es war zu weit weg, als dass ich es mit Sicherheit hätte sagen können. Erneut verließ mich mein Augenlicht und es wurde dunkel. Ich hörte mich selbst oder jemand anderen keuchen, ich weiß nicht, wer oder was es war. Da war auch eine Art durchdringender Läut- oder Piepston, der die Luft durchschnitt. Dann war da wieder das helle Licht, es kam definitiv auf mich zu. Zwei große, leuchtende Kreise. Ich duckte mich, in der Hoffnung dem sich nähernden Licht ausgewichen zu sein. Stattdessen kehrte ich in die Wirklichkeit zurück und fand mich auf dem harten Asphalt der Landstraße wieder. Meine Hüfte schmerzte, weshalb ich beschloss, erstmal sitzen zu bleiben und mich zu beruhigen. Der Piepston hallte noch immer in meinem Ohr nach, ich war schweißbedeckt und kam nur langsam wieder zu Atem. Ich lehnte mich mit dem Rücken an das Auto hinter mir. Was verdammt ist los mit mir? Erneut war der Nebel in meinem Kopf zu dicht, um ihn zu durchdringen. Ich

konnte weder Revue passieren lassen, von dem Moment, der sich vor meinen inneren Augen abgespielt hat, noch konnte ich überhaupt sagen oder besser gesagt fragen, wie ich in dieses Auto gekommen bin. Oder wo ich hinwollte. Es war, als wenn ... ich weiß es nicht. Ich versuchte mich aufzurappeln, die Hand dabei auf die schmerzende Hüfte gedrückt. Ich drehte mich um, immer noch auf der Suche nach einem Ortschaft, vergebens. Ich humpelte zur Autotür, als meine Hände wieder anfangen zu zittern, mein Atem sich beschleunigte und mein Kopf schrie: „NICHT IN DAS AUTO!!!“ Witzig, dass mein Kopf zu keinem klaren Gedanken fähig ist, aber dennoch meint, mir Befehle erteilen zu können. Wenigstens habe ich nun eine Erkenntnis: warum auch immer, aber ich habe Angst vor diesem Auto. Oder Autos im Allgemeinen? Oder hat mein Körper bloß Angst, dass ich mich wieder aus dem Auto rolle? Na gut, wohl doch keine Erkenntnis für heute. Ich entfernte mich wieder vom Wagen und ging, humpelnd die schlecht beleuchtete Straße entlang. Während ich zu den Bäumen empor starrte und fasziniert von dem sich mir bietendem Lichtspiel der untergehenden Sonne und dem Schatten der Bäume war, tippte mir eine Hand auf die Schulter. Hektisch drehte ich mich um, ich hatte schließlich niemanden kommen gehört. Eine Frau, Mitte vierzig, stand mir gegenüber und hob erwartungsvoll die Augenbrauen. Sie hatte die Haare zu einem strengen Dutt gebunden, trug einen Trainingsanzug und war mittlerweile deutlich genervt von meinem Schweigen. Es dauerte ein wenig, bis ich den Schock abschütteln konnte und meine Stimme wiederfand. „Tut mir leid, was

hatten Sie gefragt?“, stammelte ich vor mich hin. Ich war mir nicht sicher, ob sie überhaupt etwas gefragt hatte, aber so wie sie mich ansah, wirkte es so. „Kannst du mich hören?“, es war deutlich eine Frage gewesen, aber warum war diese Frage so vertraut? Es bildeten sich kleine Lachfalten um ihren Mund, als sie ihre Lippen zu einem genervten, aber dennoch ernst gemeinten Lächeln verzog. Vermutlich sah man mir meine Verwirrung an, da ich kaum versucht hatte, diese zu überspielen. „Da ist wohl jemand aufgeregt, was? Du bist gleich dran, du schaffst das, Paule. Deine Mama wäre stolz auf dich.“ Mein Herz setzte aus. Wieder kroch dieses unerbittliche Gefühl meine Wirbelsäule hoch. Dann erklang ein lauter, schriller Pfiff. Die Frau nickte mir motivierend zu und schob mich durch den dunklen Vorhang. Ich fand mich vor einer riesigen Menschenmenge wieder, die alle jubelten und klatschten. Unsicher stellte ich mich in die Mitte der Bühne. Was passiert hier? Ich war doch gerade noch ... ganz woanders, oder nicht? Die Menschen wurden leiser, mein Herz hämmerte gegen meine Brust und dann verlief alles wie in Zeitlupe. Der erste Ton des Liedes, zu dem ich gleich tanzen sollte, ertönte. Dann der Zweite. Ich erkannte das Lied sofort, es ist ein Klavierstück, „Solas“. Es ist ein so wunderschönes Stück. Ich weiß nicht, ob mein Herz wieder einsetzte nach dem dritten Ton, oder ob es für immer verstummte. Die Erinnerungen brachen über mich hinein und schwemmten mich davon. Ich sah wieder die beiden runden Lichter, die auf mich zukamen. Ich hörte das schrille Piepsen meiner Armbanduhr. Sie wollte mich darauf hinweisen, dass mein Herz viel zu schnell schlug.

Viel. Zu. Schnell. Aber ich musste Paulina doch abholen, von der Schule. Ich musste sie abholen, damit sie noch rechtzeitig zum Tanzen kommt, aber vorher noch essen kann. Meine Paule muss doch etwas Warmes gegessen haben. Es sollte Lasagne geben, die hatte ich doch extra vorbereitet. Und Danny, er sollte auch die blöden Backwaren bekommen. Für sein Männertreffen. Auf das er viel zu oft verzichtet wegen meines blöden Herzens. Mein verdammtes Herz. Deshalb piepte die blöde Uhr. Ich hätte anhalten sollen, als ich es noch konnte. Aber dann wurde mir schwarz vor Augen. Als ich sie öffnete, sah ich die Scheinwerfer des anderen Autos auf mich zurasen. Es war nicht seine Schuld. Er konnte nicht bremsen. Ich hätte nicht fahren sollen. Ich hatte schreckliche Schmerzen, das weiß ich noch, aber ich weiß nicht mehr wo. Es tat überall weh. Ich hörte Schreie, ein lautes Aufeinanderkrachen von Metall auf Metall. Ich wusste, dass es nicht gut war. Jetzt sehe ich mich am Klavier. Ich spiele dieses wunderschöne Stück von Jamie Duffy. Ich liebe dieses Stück. Paule liebt es. Ich sehe sie neben mir auf dem Hocker sitzen. Mein wunderschönes Mädchen. Ihre wunderschönen, großen Augen strahlen. Das tun sie immer, wenn ich Solas spiele. Deshalb spiele ich es so oft. Ich sehe Paule vor mir, wie sie endlich zur Schule darf. Sie war schon immer so ein schlaues Mädchen. Ihr Papa war sich sicher, dass sie es von ihm hat. Ich bin da ganz anderer Meinung. Ich sehe Danny, Paule und mich am Strand, in unserem Haus am Kochen und Lachen. Ich höre ihr Lachen, als sie Danny aus Versehen die Tomatensauce ins Gesicht geschmiert hatte. Sie hat so ein wundervolles Lachen. Und ihr Papa ist

so stolz, ich bin so verdammt stolz auf unser Mädchen. Hände greifen unter meine Arme und helfen mir beim Aufstehen, ich muss irgendwie auf dem Boden gelandet sein. Mein Gesicht ist tränennass. Das hier ist nicht meine Aufführung. Das sollte die Aufführung meiner Tochter sein, was mache ich hier?

„Hörst du mich, Mama? Ich brauche dich so sehr. Bitte wach auf, bitte, bitte wach auf.“ Das ist sie! Das war Paulina! Aber sie ist so weit weg, warum ist sie so weit weg? Ich muss doch zu ihr. Ich muss sie doch ganz fest an mich drücken und sagen, dass ich hier bin. Dass ich immer bei ihr bin. Und wie stolz ich auf sie bin. Ich stelle mir vor, wie ich mein Mädchen in den Armen halte und ihr über ihre Haare streichle, wie ich ihr einen Kuss auf den Haaransatz gebe und ihr sage, wie leid es mir tut. Ich stelle mir vor, wie sie lächelt. Wie sie ein letztes Mal für mich lächelt. Dieses Lächeln hat sie definitiv von ihrem Papa. Ich höre wieder das Piepen. Dieses Mal ist es lauter und länger. Es ist allumfassend, es nimmt mich ein. Und dann höre ich nichts mehr.

Untitled

a selection from a photo series by Victoria Clausen



Leaf

a poem by Lukas Bartsch

Zephyros lifts me gently,
beckoning me, friendly,
to come along; explore.

Over field and meadow,
I cast my tiny shadow,
for a moment; nevermore.

East on abandoned mills,
grow lovely daffodils;
how joyfully they spoke.

Over a gentle stream,
a laugh, a dance, a dream,
in me the nymphs evoke.

Great birds pass me by,
to their nests they fly,
singing all the while.

Through a forest old,
my soul the trees did hold,
as we passed another mile.

All I searched and found,
Tranquility.

The Mink Revolution – A Cautionary Tale

an excerpt from a novel project by Luc Salinger

Content warnings may apply. Please check page 123 for more information.

Chapter 1

Denmark

4th August 2020

The sky was grey. Man-made smog mixed with the clouds to the point where one couldn't tell what was natural anymore. Through the thick tapestry, the sun was at its meridian and shone a little light on a small farm in northern Europe. The Hygge Fur Haven; the lethal was hidden in the name.

A faint rumbling shook Michael awake. His eyelids fluttered and the little tractor came into focus. Upon its saddle rode a man and as he drove closer, Michael got a big whiff of the contents of the container the little tractor pulled on its rear. His lungs were filled with the sweet-smelling decay of pig and chicken intestines that the man, now armed with a tube, sprayed on top of each of the cages. The mushy paste dribbled down from above. The minks from afar squealed in joy as Michael's snout began to water. The man continued, slowly emptying the colossal

tank. The eerie fluorescent light was as poignant to the eyes as the odour was pungent to the nose.

The closer it got, the more the smell of the rotting sludge made his little snout water, saliva dribbling out of the corner of his mouth. The fumes of the fermented food sent him almost into a frenzy, eagerly but softly scraping the thin metal bars of his cage. The minks around him were awake and hungry. They began to coil themselves around their own bodies and tuned into the stirring with Michael as if they were a little hungry orchestra, pulling on the cage like a harp. The tractor was getting closer now. The low rumbling of it rang in his ear.

The man was old and weathered. He looked tired, most of his face hidden by an old cap which he seemed to have been wearing for decades, and a facemask. His motions were habitual, as if he was a machine which maintained nothing more than soulless produce. He pulled the nozzle of the tube to the cages over Michael.

Michael had lived in the farm for two years, born and raised in Denmark. His cage, like so many others, was covered in grime and filth, not only from Michael, but from his predecessors. There were hundreds, maybe thousands of these cages, rising in towering columns, each balanced precariously on top of the next. His fur was dirty and matted. Although he could coil around his own body, the cage wasn't big enough to properly groom himself. It used to be easier when he was a small kit.

Some of the rotten slush dribbled from the top cages down onto Michael's nose. His tongue gingerly wrapped around his snout, slurping up

the food and he started to disassociate. Away from the farm, where his only worth was his body and to an empty white box, where the only thing on his mind was the sweet and wretched taste of the food. Survival numbed him to the pain, but not to the bliss of satiating his appetite. He indulged fully in the fleeting moment.

The tractor moved on, the man methodically spraying the fermented feast over the rows of cages. When he was at the tail end, he swerved, going into another row to repeat the process. Michael knew that, once the man had sprayed the top of every cage, the inspections would follow. After that, the culling. Michael had hoped to not be picked so many times, but seeing his brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces shoved in a box, leaving nothing but an empty silent cage behind, haunted him. It made him realise that maybe there was a fate crueller than death.

The workers on the farm never cared for the bonds the mink shared. They were unfazed by the eerie screams and scowls they let out when they were ripped out of their cage by the scruff of their neck. They weren't anything but hosts for the desired pelt. Some tried to gnaw and rip at their own fur, cursing their existence, but it was futile. The fur remained fluffy and pristine, regrowing and healing from the self-inflicted wounds.

The tractor's rumble began to fade as the man reached the far end of the row where he had begun, driving away as another worker stepped into the place. Michael was still licking the last remnants of mush off his paws when a sound caught his ear. Not the familiar grunts of exhaustion

that the minks would occasionally spurt from their lips, but something sharper, more urgent. A high-pitched whimper, followed by a sudden scuffle. His ears perked up.

He turned his head toward the noise and saw one of the smaller cages being flung open by a worker. Inside was a young mink. Not tall enough to fall under the radar of the workers usually. The little one squealed in terror, its tiny claws scrambling against the wire as the man grabbed it by its neck.

Michael tensed, trepidation surging through his body. He had seen this before. The young ones were supposed to be spared. They were too small to be of much use yet, but sometimes they disappeared when their health declined. Once they had left the cage, they would never come back. Michael would have shut out the screams like he always did, knowing it was just part of his little life. But something about this was different.

The mink's eyes locked onto Michael's for just a moment. Wide, terrified, pleading and only four cages away. The message was clear: Michael, don't leave me here to die. Michael!

The worker's hand was rough, seemingly indifferent to the fear in the screams, and with a careless yank, he pulled the young mink free. A sharp, bloodcurdling yelp echoed across the rows of cages as the worker tossed the small body into a sack slung over his shoulder, as if he were Santa Claus.

Locking eyes with that mink, knowing what was bound to happen to him, made Michael's blood boil. He didn't know why, for this was happening for the hundredth time now, but it was too much. No... Michael's paws clenched the metal bars of his cage, claws digging into the grime that was stuck there. He had seen too many vanish like that. Too many brothers, sisters, cousins, stolen in the bright of day, carried away like trash. But this kit hadn't been sick, hadn't even been given the chance to grow.

Something snapped, something inside of him. The cold acceptance of his life in the cage, the routine, the quiet endurance, the fleeting moments of rotten pleasure, all of it shattered at that very moment. He couldn't take it anymore and he wasn't going to.

Michael growled in a low, menacing tone. It would've startled even him, but his mind was too filled with rage to care. It grew louder, a rumbling in his chest that soon turned into a horrendous snarl. The other minks around him stirred, glancing at him. They felt the same way. What was happening in front of them was unfair, but they were too afraid. But not Michael. Not anymore.

His eyes darted around his cage, searching for a weakness in the structure he used to accept as impenetrable. His claws scraped at the corner where the metal had rusted through the years. He had picked at it before out of mere curiosity. Now, fuelled by rage and fury, his claws worked with purpose.

The bars gave way with a snap and creak. He had his opening.

Michael lunged.

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*Germany*

*4th August 2020*

‘We’d never use gas to kill minks. They are semi-aquatic after all. They can hold their breath for a long time.’ Fiola was trying her best to remain calm. In front of her were three girls from her class. They all wore a brown vest embroidered with a fish net, a dark blue skirt that went to their knees and black shoes with pointed tips.

‘So, what do you do to them?’ The girl in the middle spoke in a muffled tone into her pink facemask. Her name was Paula. Top of her grade and class rep. She stood there, crossed arms, with a venomous glare.

‘Well, we ...’ Fiola glanced at the pocket knife the girl on the left was holding. ‘We induce trauma by blunt force. I know this may sound bad, but I have never had to go for a second hit. It’s a humane way to die.’

Without warning, Paula grabbed Fiola by the throat and jammed her head against the wall of a bathroom stall. Fiola felt the pain travel throughout her body, shaking her to her core.

‘You have no right to put the word “humane” into your mouth. You’re not human,’ Paula hissed in Fiola’s ear.

Fiola’s mind went to her home. Her dad, proud owner of the only Mink farm left in Germany, PELTOPIA written boldly at the entrance. The thousands of minks that died every year there and the thousands that were born. It was an endless cycle of exploitation, but for Fiola, it

seemed more like a trade. The minks were born into what she saw as a kind of earthly paradise, only to ascend to a higher heaven a few years later.

Fiola wanted to say something, but her head hurt so bad from the impact that it was impossible to get a coherent word out. She just grunted. The girl on the left unsheathed her knife.

‘Fuck her up, Paula,’ she said and held the knife out to Paula, who quickly grabbed it. ‘They skin the minks alive, don’t they?’

‘Yeah, I saw that in the news,’ the girl on the right said. ‘They hold the animal by the neck and peel the fur off like it’s a potato.’

Paula grabbed Fiola again by her jaw, ripping her face mask off, then pulling her jaw up so her neck was exposed. She pressed the pocket-knife against her skin, just over the throbbing vein that was pulsing in rhythm with Fiola’s heartbeat.

‘That vein you got there,’ her voice sounded cold and raspy, ‘that’s what keeps you going. Every animal, all the little creatures you butcher, they all have that little blue line, a pulse and a will to live. To you though, they’re just fur and flesh to tear apart, right?’

Fiola didn’t say anything, clenching her teeth as she felt Paula press the knife closer to her skin so that a little ball of blood blossomed on the edge of the blade.

‘You feel that?’ Paula mockingly asked the pale girl. ‘That fear? The panic, the feeling you’re about to die? Never spent a second thinking about what the minks feel when you skin them, did you? Only difference

now between you and a mink is that I'm not as sick as you are. I have the choice to let you go, but they never have a choice, do they?'

Fiola's pulse hammered in her throat. Paula's words affected her, but it didn't get under her skin as much as Paula was hoping. Fiola wondered how Paula's brutality was different from the cruelty she claimed to be against.

She was a hypocrite, Fiola realised, but that realisation was meaningless, as she still felt the knife press tightly against her throat.

As the blade continued to let a bit of blood pool out of Fiola's neck, Paula wiped it off with her thumb before it stained the shirt. Fiola's heartbeat was racing, and she was panting, but tried her best not to move as to not sever the vein herself.

'I really should hate you more than anything on this earth,' Paula said, looking at her stained thumb. 'And I do, but what drives me to hate you even more is the fact that you don't seem to hate yourself. You stay at your stupid farm with your stupid dad, slaughtering poor animals like you enjoy it. You're sick, honestly. Bet you're getting a high off snuffing the light out of their eyes. Being your dad's obedient little daughter who does his dirty work...'

Paula leaned in closer to get a better view of the girl's neck. 'Maybe you're just too much of a coward to stand up to him. Too pathetic and weak to do the right thing.' She gently pulled the blade back from Fiola's neck. 'I should just do it, for the animals.' She stared at her, as a little droplet trickled down, leaving a little stain on Fiola's shirt collar.

For weeks, Paula had glared at Fiola in the hallways. She didn't hide how much she hated animal abuse and how much of that hate was projected on Fiola, but Fiola would never have expected Paula to hate her this much.

'You make me sick, Fiola.' Paula said, her voice hoarse, almost as if she was about to cry. 'You're disgusting. All of you is. You think you're untouchable, don't you? You think your father's farm and the stupid laws in this country will protect you, that this pelt pandemonium you helped build won't come crashing down on you one day.'

Paula stepped back a little, away from Fiola, but still glaring at her, enraged. 'But it fucking will. Maybe then you will truly understand what it means to be powerless, like those animals you butcher. Maybe then you feel something, other than knuckle-dragging loyalty to your father.' The knife fell onto the floor and the girl on Paulas left picked it up swiftly.

'Let's go.' Paula commanded and the two girls beside her walked out. The girl on her right spat one final time onto the ground next to Fiola, who sat at the bathroom stall's wall, holding her neck.

# Sic Transit Gloria Mundi

a poem by Lukas Bartsch

My name is written in water  
My portrait is painted in sand  
My story is told in echoes  
My battles long since fought in vain  
My glory rides with the west wind  
I have been the king of the clouds

# Dusk

a poem by Lukas Bartsch

When the sun gently embraces the waves,  
and darkness falls soft as a feather,  
listen to the singing of the stars.  
Be silent and look toward the moon,  
for her glow will tell of a new dawn,  
which ends the time of contemplation.  
O' but alas the moon still stands high,  
so, remain here for a while longer.

# To Make Whole

an essay by Liv Hambrett

It's a warm afternoon in late September and I'm sitting in a quiet room with sixteen other adults. We're all perched at small wooden desks that creak each time someone re-crosses their legs or shifts in their seat. The room we're in is in the beautiful old *Volkshochschule* building, once a school, on Kiel's Muhliusstraße, which is just off Bergstraße, a street that only really has meaning to students who frequent its sticky-floored bars, or fly down it at extraordinary speeds on bicycles. One block back from the *Volkshochschule* is a retirement home, which we used to visit when my husband's Oma was still alive and not too much farther over is the *Universitätsklinikum Schleswig-Holstein* where both my children were born. About the same distance away, but in the other direction, is the *Standesamt*, where we married ten years ago this year, and just one street over is the restaurant we celebrated in. The room I am seated in on this amber afternoon in September sits almost precisely in the middle of a decade's worth of memories and milestones made in a city I have come to know better than the one in which I was born.

The sixteen of us, feet tucked under our small desks, pens lined up, phones turned off, are waiting for our names to be called. There's a kind-faced woman up the front of the classroom, who has spoken in

crisp, clear German from the moment she walked in, most probably because she has spent her life, like me, teaching her language. As she calls our names, all of them foreign on her tongue, none of them suited to German phonology, we go to the front desk, show our passports and receipts, proving our 25€ fee has been paid, and receive a large brown envelope. In the large brown envelope is a test and we need the test because what we're all doing that afternoon is taking another step in the process of becoming citizens of Germany.

My adult life has largely been spent in places I am not from and, because of that, my adult life has been marked by a preoccupation with ideas borne of that disconnection. I obsess over the notion of belonging, how it is shaped, its fragility and its power. Defined by my very *un*belonging and marked indelibly by my efforts to redraw my person – and my understanding of her – outside of where I come from, I spend much of my time thinking about how that works and what it looks like.

Most of the answers to the questions I busy myself with are found, quite delightfully, in the ordinariness of the everyday. In the recipes resurrected from my childhood, in the words and expressions my kids use, in the music we play, books we read, in the songs I sang to them on the long nights their baby eyes wouldn't close. I can see, a decade into parenting, there's a pattern in the behaviour I instinctively do and don't encourage, attitudes I do and don't value, and that pattern comes from a place so intrinsic, I can only have inherited it, absorbed it as I grew.

Likewise, when I go back to Australia, I see the Germanness to how we live and raise the children, the things we do and don't have, do and don't need, do and don't prioritise. I have absorbed that, too, as I have grown here. This grey area of the in-between has always been the clearest, hardest and most interesting part of the entire thing to me. I have become comfortable in its unending tension, a scholar of it.

But lately, and perhaps it is age, perhaps it is also the strange, strange world we currently inhabit, perhaps because of the global scale of human movement over the past decade, I have come to think often about the ongoing exchange that occurs between a person and the place they move to. People and places extract a number of things from one another: ideas, words, money, knowledge, skills. Taxes. Healthcare. Worry, peace, pain, discomfort. Happiness. Safety. And I have come to see that as a person comes to know a place, an almost complete rewiring of the brain occurs at the same time as slowly, incrementally, a systemic, structural reshaping of the place does. And while, in essence, that cannot possibly be a bad thing, the fear of precisely that change seems to be driving entire societies and political movements. This, despite the fact we have been moving and rewiring, for thousands upon thousands upon thousands of years.

A year after I settled in Schleswig-Holstein, with its oil-painting coasts and windy flats, a place I recognised a home in, a place I had, by then, given birth to my daughter in, the world seemed to tilt on its axis.

Millions of people were on the move, fleeing on foot, on trains, in the back of freezing trucks, in inflatable boats the ocean claimed relentlessly. Angela Merkel's government dissolved Germany's borders and ultimately admitted just over a million people who, for the most part, were seeking refuge from war, political instability, and persecution. Of that total number, half of the applications happened in a three-month period.

It was an extraordinary time to be in the country, perhaps particularly so as a foreigner. I watched as the country I was in the early stages of forming a relationship with, became a poster child of acceptance and global altruism at the same time as it completely transformed itself. Merkel's catchphrase '*wir schaffen das*' was everywhere, at first said in earnest and later, when the tide turned, ironically, bitterly. But first, before the bitterness and the wariness came, *Willkommenskultur* was the word of the year. Posters saying 'refugees welcome' hung in windows. After Hungary closed its outbound railways, stranding thousands of people, Germans went to train stations to physically welcome those refugees at their journey's end. Container villages popped up, the *Ausländerbehörde*, a sluggish beast at the best of times, worked around the clock at a pace it didn't know it was capable of, completely overwhelmed but with a specifically Germanic approach to crisis. The country slowly realised the need for *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* in schools (despite the fact Germany has been an immigrant country for decades, but *immerhin*) and began instating programs and training teachers to

teach German as a second or other language. Merkel, who grew up in the former German Democratic Republic, itself a product of a war that displaced people in the tens of millions, sending them across oceans to change the fabric of far-flung places, was adamant. *Wir sollten uns dabei an unsere Grundwerte erinnern, uns von Artikel 1 unseres Grundgesetzes leiten lassen: Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar.*

Meanwhile, the media busied itself trying to figure out what to call these people on the move: asylum seekers, refugees, migrants? Not everyone was fleeing war, many were in search of something better and joined the surge. What were they, then? Economic refugees? Fakes? Were they even *allowed* to take advantage of this mass migration? How many were already radicalised, using the cloak of asylum-seeking to plan and wreak their wicked havoc? How many might become radicalised? Politicians, particularly those for whom division and fear was a game plan, watched on, collecting the numbers and soundbites they needed, planting the necessary seeds. They would mobilise later, reaping precisely what they had sowed. Amidst the hubbub, the headlines, the hysteria, a Syrian family moved into the church downstairs, beneath our apartment, their dead daughter's picture hanging on the wall. A two-year-old boy washed up on the beach. Nearly four thousand people died trying to run. A country, cautious of change and impulse, not designed to move quickly on anything, a culture built on waiting and watching and discussing, moved like the wind while the world watched.

In the years that followed, and in the wake of an almost type of euphoria that had seen Germans show the world a different face, seen them come good on a historical responsibility that pulses, permanently, just below the surface of its skin, something else set in. Reality, perhaps, as the complex, ill-defined process of integration began. Fatigue, wariness, distrust. It was too much, too soon, we don't have the money, the capacity, these people are too different, we don't share the same values. The optics were easy to weaponise, they always are, as is the general knowledge of the public about systems that don't affect them. 'Look at all these people, draining and straining the system' was the wildfire whisper, when, really, many of these people were waiting. Waiting to work, waiting for a stamp, a piece of paper, waiting to be trusted to join the economy. Not many people know the process of immigration, the maze it presents and this lack of knowledge engenders mistrust, and mistrust is always a fertile breeding ground for the more malleable emotions. The general consensus seemed to be how impossible it is to get so many people to integrate – but the truth is more that no one can really agree on what integration looks like and the steps involved. Most people are clear on the 'in' part of it – you come *in*, you do the work, but I fear that 'in' is something of a misnomer.

The word integrate, you see, comes from the Latin word *integrare*, meaning to 'make whole' and I think that's what we should be thinking about, not the 'in' part. Integrate doesn't mean there is an onus on a person to fit in. It means, the moment a person enters a place with the

intention of remaining there, there exists an opportunity and an impetus to render that relationship between person and place whole. Integration means we, *together*, make each other whole. That is not an individualistic act. That is a communal act, it requires the work of more than one person. It requires the bending and benevolence of systems. It is precisely that fundamental ideal I am always sighing and reminding my children of: give and take.

Three years after the crisis, Merkel, her government's popularity at an all-time low, announced her last term. Three years after that, a new government came to power, a year into a pandemic that brought the world to a standstill. Russia invaded Ukraine and, once more, millions of people were on the run. The country, in fact, the entire continent and the union that knits much of it together, began to reveal, election by election, they had been creeping to the right. At the top of every poll asking people what they were most concerned with, what they were most worried about: immigration. This made the news at the beginning of this year all the more startling: the beleaguered coalition that followed Merkel's government delivered on their promise to reform Germany's complicated, hurdle-filled path to citizenship. Overnight, it became possible for me to become a citizen of the country I live in (work in, pay taxes in, am raising my children in, own a house in) without having to renounce my citizenship of the country in which I was born – my homeland. Overnight, it meant that, once all was said and done, I would be able to vote. I would finally be, officially, a *mündiger Bürger*, a term

I first encountered in the Kindergarten Whatsapp group when a father refused to pay for a bamboo toothbrush for his child. (A more German encounter, by the way, you cannot have.) And not just me – millions of people who had been living in Germany for years would be allowed to become citizens and engage politically with the society they had long been members of. At a time when voting has never felt more vital, and at a point in Germany's history in which the country is one of the most popular in the world for immigrants, it was a move of massive proportions and potential.

Once more, the *Volkshochschulen* were overrun. People scrambled to get their official language certificates and sit their *Einbürgerungstests*, an adorable word for a profound undertaking. Appointments for the latter need to be made in person, which is how I found myself, on a June morning, sweating slightly in the office of the woman seemingly solely responsible for test registrations. A slew of new *Einbürgerungstest* appointments for September had been released and I was securing one of them. *There's one more spot, if you know of anyone who wants to take the test.* The lady was calm and kind and typed slowly with two fingers as the heat of her office thickened. I texted my friend, a US American and she drove into the city that afternoon, registered, and took the last spot. We would take the test together.

The bank of citizenship questions is online. Of the three hundred possible questions, you are asked thirty-three. Three of those questions are

about the state you reside in. (I can tell you about the state I reside in. My God, I can tell you they eat *Grünkohl* with sugar up here and the *Fischbrötchen* is holy. I can tell you where Schleswig ended and Holstein began and when the whole thing became one. I can tell you all about the process of renting a *Ferienhaus* in Denmark, which is, possibly, the most important thing you need to know up here. I can read rudimentary Plattdeutsch, I only drink East Frisian tea, and I have an *Ostsee/Nordsee* preference (*Ost*). I can tell you about the Kiel mutiny, the Hanseatic League. I know which beer goes *plop*, I know where the Vikings lived, where the Slavs built a wall. I know real northerners only say *moin* once. I hate Oktoberfest and Karneval, I say 'jo' in the most perfect way.) The other thirty questions are about Germany and its history – largely from 1933 onwards – its governmental make-up, and the values it deems fundamental to a functioning, healthy society.

Going through the questions, I came to see that, if you want to know how a country sees itself, look at what it asks people who want to become a citizen of it. The three-hundred questions show a country that sees itself tethered to its past, not allowed to outrun that shadow. A country that holds democracy close in the way a place can only when it has lost it once before. Is a dictatorship possible, can a political party remove the freedom of the press? What does freedom of religion mean and what does it look like? What does freedom of speech afford you and when is it curbed? What are the cornerstones of democracy, who votes for whom in the seemingly endless layers of the Bundestag? It is

very clear what Germany demands of its future citizens – that we understand and uphold freedom of speech and opinion and religion; that we are aware of the country’s history and how that history manifests in the present. It is also very clear that, simultaneously, a political party whose fundamental positions are the antithesis of those values, whose rhetoric is reminiscent of that same period of history, is growing in might.

The test was over quickly and my friend and I gave our brown envelopes to the teacher at the front and left the room, walking out into the afternoon sun. We had kids to get home to, errands to run. But first, we had an hour or so to get sushi, in a restaurant underneath the first apartment I ever knew in Kiel, next to the shoe shop where we bought the tiny little shoes our kids first walked in, across the road from the playground I chased toddlers around. It seemed like, that afternoon, the universe wanted to remind me of all the ways in which I am tied to this place, all the ways in which I have made it my own. It wanted to show me how long I have been picking at the edges of all of this, trying to peel back the layers and understand what we are doing when we move somewhere. We are, ultimately, asking a place to have us (and I am reminded of the way we teach children to thank people for having them, and how there is no German counterpart to that). To shelter us, feed us, let us grow in its soil, use its water, its food. In turn, we offer to share what we know, what we have learnt on our travels, inherited from our place of birth. These things are our *Mitbringsel* and, if accepted, they

can bring a place great joy and unexpected growth. If they are received warmly, openly, with interest, they can spark an almost neural connection on a societal level. We push ourselves to learn a new way of thinking and speaking, to make a constant, concerted effort to communicate, to keep reaching out. And we break off pieces of our own languages and offer them, because it will help people understand us and if they understand us, we will remember that kindness and pay it back somewhere, to someone. And it is in this process of give and take, we become a little of where we are; and where we are becomes us. A whole is made.

# Herbst

a poem by Jacob Frederik Horn

Pärchen flanieren fröhlich zwischen Gold,  
Wind bläst rauschend in das Rot.  
Ein sanftes Grau fliegt durch den Himmel,  
Während Gänsegruppen einen See umkreisen.  
Mützen radeln über Laub  
Und Stiefel hinterlassen auf dem Asphalt feuchte Abdrücke.  
Kragen bäumen sich auf  
Und die Sonne versinkt zu früher Stunde.

# A Night Out

a short story by Nick Bussenius

You made it inside. Your feet hurt and you realize you're shivering from the cold outside, but you made it inside and that's all that matters right now. Alongside you, three of your friends also made it and while you thought more would be here, you already know not everyone can get inside in time. The air smells musty with faint traces of cigarettes and you hear a muffled sound coming from deeper inside the building, a soft beating, pulsing through the tight hallways, mixed with voices and shouts.

After putting away your jacket and backpack, you and your friends decide to visit the bathroom first. You enter the only free stall, and your friends follow you inside; after all, the space is limited, and you should use it efficiently. The pungent smell of ammonia fills your nostrils, and you stop breathing through your nose. After all of you are done, you feel at ease. You can finally begin to let go of the past days and weeks.

You leave the bathroom behind and make your way inside. Lighting is only used sporadically, just a few lightbulbs illuminate your way and, at points, there is no light at all. You move along the tight corridor, the sounds becoming more pronounced with every step you take, until you arrive at a junction. To the right you can see warm, but turbid light illuminating the corridors and hear the sound of a few dozen people talking, creating an unintelligible echo. To the left there is darkness, only

broken by a few flashes of bright light, and the beat you've been hearing since arriving. You and your friends consider which way to go. Your friends want to go to the right first, but the beating in the darkness has enthralled you. Every pulse of light and sound commands you to step into the dark. Your friends have made up their minds and are making their way down the right corridor, while you stay behind, uncertain of your next move. You see them, almost at the next bend of the corridor, when you decide to follow your intuition and walk down the corridor on the left.

The darkness envelops you and the beat becomes louder. A sound like giants hitting drums to prepare for their last, now forgotten, crusade, the flashes of light conjuring a raging lightning storm in your imagination. You arrive at the bend of the corridor; the sound of the drums is beginning to push the air around you into your ears, dulling all other sounds. After a couple of steps, the corridor begins to widen and you can see a crowd of people, moving, illuminated only by the flashes of light. The building has swallowed you whole and you're deep inside its churning entrails. You can see rows and rows of people, men and women, all facing the front and swerving from side to side. You move closer to the crowd, observing their behaviour, but, just like everyone else, the drums command you to move. You begin to swerve, but quickly realize that that's not enough. You want to feel it. You move forward through the crowd, softly pushing others aside and dodging people that are un-pushable. You're in the centre of the crowd and feel

movement all around you. You begin to heat up, the cold of only a few minutes ago is not even a memory anymore. While you move, you still feel unfulfilled. The centre seems good at first, but to truly feel it you have to be in the front, you think to yourself. The crowd becomes denser the more you move forward and your pushing through is met with stares and drowned-out words from strangers, but that's none of your concern right now. The front is almost in sight and with one last push, you're part of it.

You feel like you can breathe freely again, even though the air is hot and humid. You made it and the reward for your perseverance is the freedom to move and to finally see the source of the drums and flashing lights. You begin to move again, more actively than most people you've seen so far. While you're moving, the lights begin to switch, the flashes of bright, white light flicker less than before until they stop entirely. The drums stop as well and the anticipation rises, as if the room is holding its breath to prepare for a jump into unknown waters. The room becomes dark for a moment, until the lights return, this time in a kaleidoscope of colours. Simultaneously the drums return, louder and faster than before and you know there is no possibility of not moving right now and you let go of every other thought. You only become aware of your surroundings, when the drums begin to calm again, and you begin to look around. There are no familiar faces close to you, you're still alone and you're beginning to wonder what your friends are doing, when you see a head turn and a pair of eyes meet yours. This is nothing

unusual, you think to yourself. It's not your first time being here, nor is it something unusual to see someone new here, but this time feels different. A person moves aside, and you can see the face of the person looking at you and for the first time since entering the room, you stop moving. The eyes belong to a woman, roughly the same size as you, and her gaze towards you continues uninterrupted. You've seen her – or rather the back of her head – in the front before. She was dancing energetically, differently from the rest, but now, just like you, she's standing still, keeping the eye contact intact. A smile flickers over her face and, mesmerized by her, you're unable to resist and return the smile. The colours around you begin to increase in luminosity and intensity. Her smile grows and begins to shine radiantly, and you begin to feel a tingly sensation in your feet. This sensation starts to take over your body. At first softly, like the first few waves of the returning tide, soon like a tsunami crashing onto shore. You see her in the bright lights and your mind becomes hazy, when the colours around you begin to erupt even more brightly and fog envelops you and the rest of the crowd. You still see her, only a few meters away from you, but then the fog becomes too thick, and you lose sight of her smile, lost in the brilliant nebula of colours.

You're ecstatic. Your heart is racing, and your thoughts are shooting in uncountable amounts directions, as if your brain has made you aware of your billions of synapses firing continuously. Your surroundings begin to feel overwhelming, and you realize that a break is in order. You make

your way back through the crowd, but always looking around, hoping to catch her gaze again. You enter the dark corridor and move towards the warm and hazy light. You move along the corridor and towards the other part of the building, the outside area. You enter the outside through a door. It's heavy and the window in the middle shows you, that, just like the floor, the outside area is packed. Before closing the door, you turn around to see if someone else wants to go outside and you're partly blinded by the harsh white light above the entrance. After walking around the area for a while, you finally see your friend sitting at a table. He's joined by others. People you've seen here and talked to before and a few others you've never seen before. You join them and the conversation continues. Stories of other nights like this are shared, thoughts about issues and non-issues are discussed, stories about found friends and lost loves are mixed with achievements; is there much truth to any of those, you wonder, but in the end, you conclude it doesn't matter. The set of people at the table changes continuously. Your friend left thirty minutes ago, but you're still sitting there, with people you've never known up until now and will never meet again. Cigarettes are being smoked at such a pace, you would think they're gum drops, and while you always think to yourself that it's harmful to do so, right now, a single drag lifts the weight from your shoulders and smoking an entire cigarette envelops you in a warm blanket of comfort and relaxation. And while you sit there, chatting and smoking, your mind occasionally wanders back to her.

You yearn to see her again, so you begin to rotate between the floor and the outside area, occasionally going to the bathroom to drink and rejuvenate your feeling of ecstasy. Outside you make friends, inside you let go of thought, until you leave the floor and sit outside again. This time you're alone at the table, but you don't mind. You're enjoying your state of euphoria and don't necessarily need anyone else to do so. This changes when you see the door to the outside area open and see her in the line of people who want to leave the area. You only see her profile and this time she's not looking towards you. As she gets closer to the exit you see her, illuminated by the light above the door. She turns around to laugh along with a friend of hers. Her movement takes only a few seconds, but to you, it seems that time stands still. Her hair, flowing and untamed, shines in bright white, like a willow frozen in deepest winter and her smile shines even more brilliantly than earlier. When time unfreezes again, she's already inside and you sit at your table, alone, as before, but this time with more on your mind.

And so, the night continues. You rotate between the outside area, the floor and the bathroom. Hours have gone by in mere minutes. You find your friends, old and new, all over the building. You dance on the floor with them, talk and laugh with them and let go of your thoughts again. And you remember that you haven't seen her in a while. Over the course of the next few hours, you'll keep looking out for her, thinking about approaching her, anticipating a possible future interaction, and wondering if she thinks the same.

The night wanes. Sitting outside again, you realize the sky isn't entirely dark anymore and your body is slowly telling you how much work you've done tonight. Your feet hurt and you're feeling warm and sweaty. Knowing your limits, you begin to prepare your departure. You grab your things, your friends, and start one last rotation through the building, looking for people to say goodbye to and for things you might have forgotten. The moment you leave the building, the cool air hits your face, you hear birds chirping happily and the brightness outside blinds you. It reminds you of the exit of the outside area and of her. It reminds you of her hair and her smile. Her smile, still, in the front of the crowd, looking at you, and now, never to be seen again. Her smile already beginning to fade in your memory.

A smile fading into the dark.

# Meine Melancholie und der wütende Vogel

a short story by Ani

*Content warnings may apply. Please check page 123 for more information.*

Seit Tagen habe ich ein Gefühl auf den Augen, als wenn jemand mir seine Daumen auf die Lieder drückt, manchmal schlafe ich einfach ein und komme nicht aus meinem Delirium, so als wäre mein Körper aus Blei. Trotzdem spüre ich aber diesen Drang, oder ist es ein Schuldgefühl?

Als hätte ich einen wütenden Vogel in der Brust, der unaufhörlich gegen mein Herz flattert. Ich nenne diesen Zustand gerne „Melancholie“ und romantisiere ihn damit vor mir selbst. Es ist sowieso ein Zustand, den kaum jemand zu sehen bekommt, denn es gelingt mir noch augenscheinlich zu funktionieren. Ich sitze in meinen Unikursen, gehe zur Arbeit ... dieses Semester fühlte sich an wie ein Fiebertraum, ich war häufig spät dran, wirkte desorientiert und war nicht ganz ich selbst. Menschen, die mich gut kennen, sehen: ich bin am Straucheln. Menschen, die mich nicht kennen, könnten mich für einfältig, faul oder plump halten. Dieser Gedanke schmerzt mich sehr, denn es rührt ein Gefühl in mir an, das ich schon aus meiner Kindheit her kenne – „Nicht

genug zu sein“, ungesehen, missverstanden oder am schlimmsten: als Belastung empfunden zu werden.

Dabei war ich doch letztes Semester so gut dabei ... Wie schnell sich doch wieder alles ändert. Das Leben scheint eine Achterbahn zu sein und ich habe den Sicherheitsbügel vergessen. Ich werfe mich von Ecke zu Ecke auf dem Sofa, immer mit dem Gedanken „Jetzt fange ich an – es wird Zeit“, um es dann doch wieder nicht zu schaffen. Während ich vergesse mich zu waschen, türmt sich das dreckige Geschirr in der Küche. Ich betäube mich mit einer Dauerbeschallung an Podcasts und Serien ... kann keine Stille mehr ertragen. Ich sehne mich dennoch nach Ruhe, nach einem Ort für mich, einem Balkon, einem Garten, einem Loch.

Ich schaffe es, den Laptop aufzuklappen und da ist dieses Gefühl auf den Augen und der Kreis schließt sich wieder. Für alle die ebenso wie ich, manchmal gefangen sind, in sich selbst, in ihrer eigenen „Melancholie“, ihr seid nicht allein. Bitte gebt nicht auf, die Welt dreht sich weiter, nur manchmal zu schnell.

*Info-Telefon Depression – Rufnummer: 0800 3344533*

# Tide

a short story by Annika Dreffein

*Content warnings may apply. Please check page 123 for more information.*

The waves are lapping over her feet, covering more skin as the water ebbs and flows, the tide rolling in quickly. She curls her toes slightly, feeling the sand move out underneath them as the water takes, takes, takes, as is its nature.

Her loose hair is tugged back by the breeze, and in her ears, a low and eerie sound that drowns out every noise originating from further inland.

With how grey the sky is today, the beach is completely empty, the weather not lending itself to a swim or even a nice walk along the coast – no, it's just her today, the overwhelming lack of company something she's grown accustomed to.

As the water sinks into the bottom of her jeans, cold and clammy against her skin, she hears the single, shrill cry of a seagull. Through the wind, it almost sounds like the distant sound of a child calling for help.

She shivers. The combination of wind and cold saltwater lets the chill seep right into her bones. She should go back now, to her empty house right behind the dike. If she takes a warm bath, maybe drinks one of her herbal teas, she can avoid catching a cold.

The tide is moving in quickly, proving the sea's reputation as a force of nature with every pull on her legs. Idly, she watches as seashells tumble past her, spinning wildly, sinking beneath the foam. She wonders if in a few hours, they will wash back up on the shore, unharmed by the then ebbing water, or if they'll be dragged off the coast, lost to unknown depths of blues and greys.

A glimpse of orange catches her attention and, on instinct, she bends down to retrieve a small pebble, brightly coloured and slightly see-through, weighing next to nothing.

She thinks of small hands held out to her in excitement, an array of sunset-coloured treasures, resting on soft skin. At home, they'd throw them into a bowl of saltwater, but none ever rose to the top, resting heavily below the mass of the water instead. Still, she keeps a bright palette of orange hues on her kitchen windowsill. This one she lets go, watches it disappear.

A wave crashes against her knee and when it draws back, she feels how it wants to take her with it. Has she been here for minutes or hours? She's been struggling to keep a grip on time. Her mailbox is overflowing with electricity bills unpaid, angry red letters printed on their envelopes. Dust rests on every surface of her home, spreading out from a room left untouched. When her life halted all those months ago, the world moved on without her. Catching up seems impossible.

Her jacket is still lying on the washed-up piece of driftwood where she left it, connected to her now only through fading footprints. The

contrast between the bright red of her jacket against the soft, dull shades of beige and grey, is harsh. A strong gust lifts it up slightly as though it were a kite, dancing in the wind with a life of its own until threatening to pull out of your tight and desperate grip.

As the water rises up to her thighs, she becomes distantly aware that she needs to leave now, needs to walk out of the water before it swallows her whole. For a moment, she imagines what it would be like to stay.

It could be so easy, standing still as she has been for so long, the water moving around her, in her stead and embracing her. She's been here for so long, too long perhaps. Her bones feel so heavy and cold. Maybe she shouldn't have ever come here in the first place.

Her house is already so devoid of life these days, what difference would one fewer jacket on the coat rack really make? She pictures a forgotten tea kettle on the stove, a wooden door left open, swinging in the wind, and a set of footprints moving towards the sea, joining an old set long since washed out. Here at its edge, the ocean is tumultuous and wild, but further out, just beneath the surface, all noise could be washed away, movement lost in the endlessly stretching expanse of water, freezing everything caught within it in time.

She hesitates, waits a little longer, entertains the thought. Then, eventually, she turns, wades out of the waist-deep water. The algae clings to her ankles as if calling her back, tugging at her with slimy cold

fingers and begging her not to leave, tendrils of dread twisting around her heart.

Returning to the shore that has since moved further inland is difficult, her legs burning with effort just to keep her upright, every step a struggle against the waves crashing against her back and pulling the coarse sand out from underneath her, shoving her to the right with the current. When she has made it onto the dry land, she turns around, takes in the rough sea, the grey, cloudy sky and the foam being blown across the beach and thinks that she might come back tomorrow.

# Dreaming

a short story by Svea Bauer

‘I will realize that I am dreaming. I will. I know it,’ I say, looking myself in the eye. The mirror works normally, as does the watch on my wrist. No strange reflection, no cryptic waves to be seen. Since my move, checking the environment around me for abnormalities has become routine. As much a routine as brushing my teeth. I squeeze the red and blue paste onto my brush. Through the window’s film, the streetlights shine in rainbow. At noon, when the sun hits just right, the bathroom fills with an array of captivating colours that dance around on the cold, white tiles.

But now, it is neither noon nor is the sun shining. It’s the middle of the night and it’s raining. In the week I’ve lived here, not a day has gone by without rain. I open the window, and the smell of earthy wet streets enters my nose. Not a soul is to be seen. The rain keeps drizzling down. The melodic sound of rain hitting the roof has become one of my favourite things in this flat, besides the rainbow film of the bathroom window. It is not hard to pick favourites if you don’t own a collection of things.

I am not a minimalist, though. Most of the boxes from my old flat are still unopened, taped closed, waiting for me to open them up and unpack them. I should be as excited as a child on Christmas morning to finally open them up, but I lack the excitement and energy of the child

on Christmas morning I maybe once was, years ago. No, the only thing I am looking forward to, is finally closing my eyes and leaving this day behind me. Not to get rid of the dark circles which grace my tired blue eyes, but to finally lucid dream again.

A lucid dream is no ordinary dream. To have a lucid dream is to have power. At least in your mind. It is like standing at the edge of two worlds, the one you know and the one you alone can mould with your will. The only limit is your imagination – no gravity, no laws of nature, just endless possibilities. But you need to be aware that you're dreaming. Sounds easier than it actually is. It has been a long time since I have put that much effort into something, training myself to check clocks and mirrors, since they don't work normal in dreams. I even started a dream journal to document each night.

I finish my bedtime routine by flushing my mouth, putting my hair up and checking the mirror one last time. I'm not dreaming.

The streetlights outside are bright enough to light my way down the corridor to my bedroom. A pile of boxes in the middle of the room almost acts like a monument, reminding me once again of the circumstances. The streetlights hitting them form almost an even bigger pile of shadow boxes along the wall. The same moment I close the curtain, the shadow monument vanishes.

*I will realise I am dreaming.*

I keep telling myself as I get down on my mattress and tuck myself in between my many pillows. The weight of my blanket almost feels like it

wants to push me on the ground, my eyelids get even heavier than the blanket and my thoughts start to silence themselves.

*I will realise I am dreaming.*

My eyes wander from the boxes to my clock. Cryptic numbers, how am I supposed to read this?

*I'm dreaming!*

Nothing stands in my way of spending at least some great hours in my dreams, even if it's just me. The door of the bedroom swings open and I float, light-footed, through my flat, which now looks an awful lot like my Pinterest board, but better. Opening my apartment door during my dreams is almost like pressing a start button in a video game or hitting shuffle on Spotify. What happens then is nothing like ever before.

As soon as I step through the door, the world behind me dissolves, leaving nothing but a warm, comforting void to envelop me. It is strange, yes, but in a way, it feels like home. And then, there she is. Just the two of us, drifting between the stars, suspended in the silence of the cosmos. My heart quickens with every inch I move closer to her, as if pulled by some invisible thread. She doesn't look at me. Instead, her gaze is lost in the darkness, but her face – serene, radiant – is lit with a quiet joy that takes my breath away.

What happens next unfolds beyond the limits of time. Hours, days, centuries, they all blur into one infinite moment. This isn't like any dream I've ever had before. There is a depth to it, a weight, as if the universe has paused just for us.

Our consciousnesses melt into one. I finally feel understood, as though all the loneliness I have ever known is washed away by the presence of this girl. Time flies like the gentle passing of a breeze. All that seems to exist is our connection and understanding for each other.

A loud, world-shattering sound tears the two of us apart, despite me trying to desperately hold on to her hand. I cannot lose her! Panic surges through me. I didn't even ask for her name.

In the next blink of an eye, I am sitting upright again in bed, sweaty, heart pounding, breath uneven. The night has shaken something loose inside me, leaving me more confused than ever, unsure what to make of this mess, unable to untangle it.

Throughout the day my thoughts drift back to her, to that encounter. I need to clear my mind. Feeling like I am still walking in a dream, I step outside, weaving through crowds of strangers who would never understand, even if they cared. Despite the late hour, I am exhausted. Coffee will help.

With my head still foggy, I wait in line. Then a voice pulls me back to reality.

'What can I get for you?'

It hits me. I stare embarrassingly long at the barista. Her voice. Her face. Can it be? No, it can't. She hands the receipt to the customer before me, still with her eyes on the register.

'Hi! What can I ...' She stops. Her eyes widen, she silently gasps. Does she also recognize me? Seconds pass that feel like hours.

'Sorry! I didn't mean to be rude, what can I get for you?'

You can see her struggling to regain composure.

'A cappuccino, please.' I smile, trying to keep calm and play it cool as my heart pounds in my chest.

She smiles back, handing me the cup with the same hands I just held, mere hours ago.

'Here you go.'

'Thanks.'

I take the cup and walk out, feeling the weight of that one brief moment. Outside, I sit on a bench, staring at the coffee, trying to piece it all together. As I lift the cup to drink, something catches my eye.

Her number, scrawled on the side.

I smile. My heart leaps.

# Lífið – Leben

a short story by Anaëlle-Sophie Hagen

*Content warnings may apply. Please check page 123 for more information.*

Wir waren jung, neugierig und mutig, aber blutige Anfänger\*innen. Du warst impulsiv. Du warst schlau. Du lerntest schnell und hast genauso schnell wieder vergessen, zumindest tatest du so. Du warst getrieben von deinen Trieben und zugleich konnte ich durch deine Augen in dein Herz sehen. Und in meins. Im Winter wurdest du weich. Rot, fuchsrot, feuerrot. Meine Hand verschwindet auf deinem Rücken.

Weißer Strahlen umtanzen deine schwarzen Füße. Beige Linien umrahmen deine mandelförmigen Augen. Wie so vieles, teilst du das mit deiner Schwester, Mandla, deine übriggebliebene DNA. Sie ist eine Anführerin, du ein Mitläufer und doch weißt du genau, was du willst. Und dabei bist du so schön. So schön. Und so unberechenbar. Du unterscheidest dich von deiner Familie und doch verschlägt mir ihr Anblick den Atem. Dann sehe ich dich, in deiner divenhaften Tante, deinem ungestümen Neffen, deiner tollkühnen Schwester. Trete ich näher, verschwindest du. Du bist es nicht. Entfernter als jedes Himmelsbild.

Gemeinsam waren wir im Wald, auf den Pfaden und im Gehölz. Auf den Feldern, entlang der Treckerspuren und zwischen den Ähren. Du hieltest nicht viel von vorgefertigten Strecken. Dein Weg war stets dein

eigener, auch wenn du dich dabei meist selbst überrascht hast. Wenn du wolltest, konntest du scheinen. Du konntest strahlen, alle Blicke auf dich ziehen. Dann warst du bei mir. Wir wurden eins. Voll und ganz. Jeden Schritt hast du mit Bedacht gesetzt. Jeden Schritt konnte ich mit Bedacht setzen. Du hast mich fester an dich gezogen. Aus einem Takt, wurde ein Fluss, wurde ein Rhythmus, den es nicht zu imitieren gab, den es nicht zu imitieren gibt. Er ist da oder nicht. Du bist da oder nicht. Du warst da, oder nicht? Und wenn du nicht wolltest, warst du bei den Sternen, bei den Wölfen, bei deiner Mutter, nur nicht bei mir, bei deinen Instinkten, in deinen Beinen. Schnell. Dahin. Blitz, aber nicht artig. Dann ließ ich dich sein. Du kamst zu mir zurück.

Ich liebe dich. Ich liebe dich immer.

Im Frühling erwachte in dir ein Feuer, ein Feuer der Natur, du warst getrieben, als würden dich deine Urväter rufen. Im Sommer wurdest du zum Kind, hattest du zwar Angst vor Pfützen, konntest du doch stundenlang im Fluss herumstolzieren. Dabei warst du stark. Die Nässe brachte deine kräftige Brust zum Vorschein. Im Spätsommer wurdest du ruhig, wir machten Spaziergänge, bevor Wind und Frost deine wilden Geister wieder zum Leben erweckten. Im Winter warst du eine Samtkugel, feurig trotztest du Schnee und Eis.

Wir konnten spielen, du warst so verspielt. Fast alles war für dich ein Spiel, bis zu deiner letzten Minute. Ich lief los, du auf meinen Versen. Wagtest nicht, mir einen Schritt voraus zu sein, doch abhängen ließest du dich nie. Ehrgeizig warst du. Hielt ich abrupt an, tatest du es mir

gleich. Du konntest stehen wie ein Soldat, zuhören wie ein Soldat, gehen wie ein Soldat. Viertakt. Zweitakt. Mein Schritt war dein Schritt. Du hast mich beobachtet, nachgeahmt, von mir gelernt. Oder war es andersherum? Ich weiß es nicht mehr. Ich vermisse dich.

Ohne Zweifel, es war nicht immer leicht. Du hattest deinen Kopf, ich hatte meinen. Du hattest gesundheitliche, psychische Probleme, Verletzungen. Ich auch. Waren wir uns selbst manchmal zu viel, waren wir doch das Einzige füreinander. Du warst mein Trost, meine Hoffnung, meine Liebe, mein Freund, meine Erlösung. Du bist mein Freund. Und erlöst auch.

Du bist Natur. Du lebst, du stirbst, du kommst, du gehst, du bist, du bist nicht, du liegst, du schwebst. Das Gras sieht anders aus, da, wo du gelegen hast, bevor du gingst. Ich sehe deinen Abdruck im Tau. Du warst schnell, schneller als der Wind, schneller als du selbst, bis zum Ende. Auch dein Abschied. Hast mich mal wieder überrascht.

Mein Ohr an deinem bebenden Bauch. Meine Nase in deinem warmen Fell. Nichts riecht wie du. Nichts ist so beruhigend wie du. Nichts nehme ich auf wie dich. Du hast mich gefunden. Ich brauchte dich. Du brauchtest mich. Engel gehen, wenn ihre Aufgaben erfüllt sind, du Engel aus dem Teufelsmoor.





# Content Warnings

sorted by themes

*Content Warnings may contain spoilers for the respective entries.*

## Animal Cruelty

The Mink Revolution – A Cautionary Tale

## Car Accident

Paule

## Death

Paule, Rumstadt

## Exploitation

Rumstadt

## Depression

Meine Melancholie und der wütende Vogel

## Grief

Lífið – Leben

## Homicide

Floating

## Illness

Dancing

## Stalking

Floating

## Suffering

Rumstadt

*list continued on the following page*

***Issue 2***

Suicide

Tides

Suicidal Thoughts

Meine Melancholie und der wütende Vogel, Tide

Violence

The Mink Revolution – A Cautionary Tale

*list continued on the following page*

# Content Warnings

sorted by entries

*Content Warnings may contain spoilers for the respective entries.*

Dancing

illness

Floating

homicide, stalking

Lífið – Leben

grief

Meine Melancholie und der wütende Vogel

depression, suicidal thoughts

Paule

car accident, death

Rumstadt

exploitation, suffering, death

The Mink Revolution – A Cautionary Tale

animal cruelty, violence

Tide

suicidal thoughts

Tides

suicide





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