Sample Translation
By Alice Thornton

pp. 11-13
[Present – introduction to the story and the main characters]

ONE.
1st and 2nd July 2016

Tom Monderath races through the city. He's speeding because he's running really late. But he's also trying to drive away from his feelings. His mother Greta's confusion is growing every day and it's starting to get under his skin. She was diagnosed with Alzheimer's a year ago now, and he has since learned to deal with it. But on the days like today when she doesn't even recognise him, it cuts him right to the core.

He spots a parking space in front of Deutz Station, but it's quickly snapped up. He parks in the no-parking zone and rushes through the entrance hall, through the tunnel, looking for the right platform. Out of breath, he slides to a stop in front of his platform, the middle one, and is confused for a second. The platform, with its low ceiling, looks gloomy and narrow, like nothing more than a small commuter train would stop here. 'Attention, please. To passengers travelling on the ICE129 train from Amsterdam departing from platform 11, your train is delayed by fifteen minutes due to a service disruption.'

Tom adjusts his baseball cap, takes a deep breath and considers whether he should turn back around and move his car.

'Mr Monderath?' A shrill voice interrupts his thoughts.

A stranger in her mid-fifties with a ribbon-adorned suitcase and a penchant for pink, short skirts, and tanning salons has planted herself in front of Tom. He contorts his face into a smile – he is used to being recognised. After all, he has been one of the head anchors at FFD, a major German TV channel, for years.

'So I was saying to my Annita: "I swear that's him!" And she was saying "no chance!" But it turns out it *is* you!'

Giggling, the aforementioned friend appears next to her, looking up at Tom as if he were the seventh wonder of the world. She pulls out her phone and asks if they can take a selfie together.

'Sure.' Tom steps between the two ladies, bends his knees a little to be at their height and smiles routinely into Annita's phone camera.

'I hope you come back soon. It's good to see you back on your feet,' says the orange woman, whose accent makes her sound like she's a member of the Cologne

nobility. She pats his arm.

'Yeah, sure,' Tom replies. He just wants to leave before any other surrounding travellers start thinking about taking a selfie with him.

'Can I have your autograph?' asks Annita.

'Sorry, I don't have any autograph cards with me.'

She extends what she's holding for him to sign – something she'd bought at the butcher's, apparently – and giggles nervously. 'By the way, you look much better in person. Your eyes... I never knew they were that blue…'

Tom winces, writes *All the best, Tom Monderath* on the pig's head and wishes the two friends, who he now knows are flying to Malle for a long weekend, a nice holiday. He turns away quickly, claiming that he needs to make an urgent phone call.

'And all the best for your health!' Annita calls loudly after him.

Tom fingers for his sunglasses, pushes his baseball cap further down his forehead and walks towards the end of the track where there are no people.

All the best for your health, huh! He knows it's meant nicely, but he's sick of hearing it now. He used to enjoy meeting his viewers. But all that changed when everyone started talking to him about his health, when they started looking at him pityingly.

PANIC ATTACK! This is the diagnosis that *Bild* gave him when Tom had a fainting spell during his news broadcast twelve weeks ago. Live. With all of Germany watching. TOM MONDERATH'S DRAMATIC ILLNESS was cannibalised in the media. It suddenly became almost *en vogue* to know someone who knows someone who also suffers from panic attacks.

Only he, the protagonist of these stories, Tom Monderath, did not comment, although his silence only gave rise to more and more speculation. He even received lucrative offers: he was invited to take part in talk shows and was offered a publishing contract for a large sum. But it didn't even cross his mind to accept any of these offers. Instead, he agreed with his boss on a two-month period of special leave. Sick leave was not an option, not least because Tom would have been handed over to some doctor who would have been faffing about with some random diagnosis. He was not sick!

On the contrary. He is newly in love – with Jenny and her fourteen-week-old son Carl. In fact, this is the happiest period of his life thus far. After years in the fast lane, with nothing else on his mind but his job and his career, he has more than earned this break with them.

pp. 15-16

[Present – introduction to the story and the main characters]

Tom considers just running away. He doesn't really want to meet the man he didn't

know even existed until nine weeks ago. Tom had taken a DNA test with a genealogy service so that he could learn a little more about his maternal line and was surprised to receive an encrypted message: *half-brother match*. It was a double match. And the result was clear: he has a half-brother on his father's side. Great, another family secret, Tom thought to himself at the time. With a demented mother and problems at work, his life was complicated enough. He didn't need a new supposed half-brother.

'Aren't you, like, at all curious?' Jenny asked when they spoke about it.

'No,' Tom answered, decisively. And yet thoughts of his parents' unhappy marriage kept creeping into his mind. It didn't surprise him at all that his father had had other lovers. But dealing with the results of these affairs didn't interest him. He preferred to stay in the present and enjoy his *own* new love. That's why he didn't investigate further. That is, until he received the following – still encrypted – e-mail from the genealogy site.

My name is Henk van Dongen. I was born in 1964, live in Amsterdam, and recently found out by chance that the man I always thought was my father is not my biological dad. And according to the results of this DNA test, we seem to have the same father.

pp. 207-214

[1944-1954 – Konrad, who is going to be a doctor, professes his love for Greta. Introduction to important protagonists like Uncle Drickes.]

How's the exam going? Uncle Drickes wrote.

What was Conny supposed to reply? That he couldn't think about anything but Greta. That he would give everything to make sure she'd get better again.

Dear Uncle Drickes, Conny wrote back. *I have met someone. She has been through a lot. I don't know how to be of help to her.*

An answer came after four weeks: *Many women went through a lot in the war. I would advise you to be patient. Love heals all wounds*.

Love? That word had never so much as crossed Conny's mind. He said the word quietly to himself, getting used to the way it sounded.

'Keep your fingers crossed for my exam tomorrow,' he said the next Sunday. Greta bit into a yeast roll he had brought her.

'I've been discharged.'

'That's great news! Do you want me to pick you up and bring you home?'

'I don't have a home anymore.'

Conny was glad that Elise Holloch was taking care of her and that Greta could live with Elise and her husband. The Americans had vacated the first floor of the villa and the Hollochs had finally moved back into a real flat.

Conny had helped to renovate it despite his massive workload. He'd close the windows whenever Elise Holloch went on a rant about the state of the flat, fearing the Americans in the courtyard below might understand her. 'Now look at how they lived. Like bar*barians*. They're the most uncivilised people I've ever laid eyes on.'

During his regular visits Conny would notice how, week by week, Greta was blossoming. She started by cooking and baking for the Hollochs, and then she got a job in a fountain pen factory and bought a bicycle so she could get to and from *Handschuhsheim* faster.

When Conny passed his medical exams in the spring of 1954, she gave him a modern biro engraved with *Dr med. Konrad Monderath* and suggested that he use the less formal 'Du' when referring to her from now on.

They would go on walks together, from time to time. Up *Hirschgasse*, where she would show him the former apiary where she had lived with her family as refugees, and up to *Philosophenweg*.

Conny had thought for months and months about how to tell her he loved her. But he was so afraid of being rejected and losing her completely.

They were strolling up the hill, just like they did every Sunday. Meadows spread out on their right and left, the first tender green saplings sprouting, framed by shrubs whose buds were being kissed to life by the sun's rays. It smelled like new beginnings. Conny knew he had to tell her today, or else he never would. They turned onto *Philosophenweg* and he headed for the little garden up the road. 'Shall we sit on that bench over there?'

'Which one?' asked Greta.

'The one under the beech tree.'

'Crap,' thought Greta. She wanted to turn back. She hadn't been here for years – not to this park and certainly not to this bench, the spot where she'd always secretly met with Bob. As she sat down, she saw the heart Bob had carved into the tree. She read the carved words FOREVER, which seemed like a mockery to her today. He had wanted to love her forever; he had even asked her to marry him. In front of her whole family! And then he'd just disappeared, abandoning her with the child. Without any money. It was because of him that she'd had to put Marie in a home. It was because of him that she'd lost her temper when she hadn't been allowed to see her beloved little girl. It was because of him that she'd gone to prison and then lost custody of her child. It was because of that asshole Bob Cooper that her life was so fucked up. She wanted to scratch that shitty FOREVER out of the bark right now. There was no such thing as forever!

'Have you got a pocketknife with you, Konrad?'

'No, I haven't got it with me today. I've usually got it with me…' he stuttered. Then he took a deep breath, fingered the cross around his neck and turned to face her. 'I have to talk to you about something, Greta.'

So do I, she thought. She wanted to tell him that she never wanted to get involved with a man again. Not ever. But that she was so glad to have a friend like him.

'Greta, I've known this for a long time, and I don't know how it happened, but…' He was fidgety and nervous. 'But I've fallen in love with you.'

She looked at him, eyes wide. Surprised. A little unconvinced. But at least she wasn't laughing at him. Conny was relieved that he had finally plucked up the courage to tell her.

Her eyes filled with tears.

'Greta,' he said, reaching for her hand.

She sprang back, wiping her eyes with her sleeve and sniffling. Then she just stood up and walked away.

Shit, Conny thought. Now I've gone and ruined everything.

He sat on that bench for hours, as though paralysed, staring down into the Neckar valley. Life didn't seem worth living anymore.

Greta was working steadily and rapidly. She was trying not to think about anything but the fountain pens that she was unpacking. Still, Aunt Elis' questions were hammering in her head, steadily and rapidly, too.

First, she had wanted to know why Konrad had stopped coming. Greta had answered that she didn't know – which Aunt Elis hadn't believed. She had not given up on the questions, and last night Greta had tearfully confessed to her that she would never be able to love Konrad. What she hadn't told Elis, though, was that she never actually wanted to love again in her life. She never wanted to be hurt like that again, she never wanted to be abandoned again, and she never wanted to lose everything again.

'Love can be learned,' Elis had countered. 'What's wrong with him? You know you won't get a man like that again.'

Greta packed black pens, blue pens, pens on Wednesday and pens on Tuesday. She was thinking about the fact that she, as a woman who had already had a child once – and an illegitimate one at that – was lucky that a man was even interested in her at *all*.

'Are you coming to the final?' asked her colleague Doris.

'Sure,' said Greta. She wasn't particularly interested in football, but since the German team had reached the World Cup final, the giddy atmosphere in Germany had spread to her too. Not to mention that she never had any plans on Sundays.

All of Heidelberg was on its feet, and, according to the conversations, all the men knew exactly what Sepp Herberger had to do in order for Germany to win. The seven female colleagues met on the square in front of *Heiliggeist* Church and went to the *Rote Ochsen*. It was already packed even though the match between Germany and Hungary was not due to start for another two hours. And so they were turned away – from there and from every other pub they tried their luck at.

'We'll have to split up, otherwise it'll never happen,' Doris decided a quarter of an hour before kick-off. She was something of a leader and whispered to Greta that she had an idea.

At the back entrance of a brewery on *Steinstraße*, the toilet window was open. Greta, who was wearing homemade Capri pants made of blue drill, climbed into the window using a robber's ladder, then pulled Doris up. The hall was packed. The mood was tense because Germany had lost the last game against Hungary by a huge margin. Everyone was chatting to each other.

'They absolutely slaughtered us in the first round.'

'Eight three! I hope Herberger is on good form this time.'

'The Hungarians never lose.'

The television was on a small shelf in the corner, and in front of it the chairs were packed close together, in a semicircle. All of them were occupied. People were sitting not only on the seats but also on the backs of the chairs. More people were pushing from behind as more and more crammed into the hall.

'Come!' Greta took Doris by the hand and pulled her inside. They pushed their way between bodies, squeezed past chairs – and by the time the whistle blew shortly before five o'clock, they had found a spot where they could at least stand.

'Hello,' said someone next to Greta. It was Konrad.

'Hello,' she replied, startled, racking her brain for the right thing to say. She couldn't think of anything. Konrad was there with a group of people who all started rowdily talking to each other when a Hungarian scored the first goal in the sixth minute.

And, two minutes later, the Hungarians scored a second goal.

'It's no use,' Greta said to Doris, who could barely make out the small black and white screen through all the cigarette smoke.

'Want to make a bet?' Konrad interjected. Greta looked up at him and said nothing.

'Do you know him?' Doris whispered.

Before Greta could answer, everyone began to shout because Max Morlock had scored. 1-2.

Out of the corner of her eye, Greta watched as the blonde standing next to

Konrad jumped up and down, hugging him. He looked towards the television with a grin, sipping his beer. She wondered how long the game would last and decided that she would definitely leave during half-time. The Hollochs also had a TV. Everyone started to shout again and people started jumping up – the referee released a corner kick! Greta saw nothing now but the backs of the people in front of her. She could hear from the crowd, though, that Fritz Walter had kicked, that Helmut Rahn had taken over, and that the Hungarian goalkeeper had made a mistake. Suddenly everyone yelled '*TOOOOOR*!'

'Remind me of what we betted on again?' Konrad whispered to her with a grin, after the hall had calmed down again.

Greta shrugged. She still couldn't think of anything to say.

She didn't have anything to say to Doris, either, who was eyeing her curiously. Aunt Elis' words spun around in her head again: *He's nice. He is a good person. He can offer you a future. Love can be learned.*

In the second half, it started to rain even harder in Bern, where the match was happening. The pitch was damp and slippery. Hungary were still the favourites to win. Hidegkuti only hit the post, Kocsis the crossbar, Kohlmeyer saved on the line and the German goalkeeper Toni Turek saved a few successfully, too. Conny followed all of this only incidentally. All he could think about was Greta, the only woman in the room wearing trousers and a jaunty slider cap on her head. He had tried everything in the last few weeks to forget her. He had thrown himself into one amorous adventure after another, convinced himself that he'd be better off finding a woman who was less complicated than Greta.

Six minutes before the end of the ninety minutes, winger Helmut Rahn picked up a half-heartedly defended cross, shot from the corner of the penalty area and beat Grosics with a low shot to make it 3-2 to Germany.

Everyone jumped up, crying '*Toooor, Tooor, Toooor*!'

Conny saw Greta fall around her friend's neck, jumping for joy, her slider cap falling off in the process. He had never seen her so carefree. It made him happy and unhappy at the same time. He barely noticed the whole hall getting louder and louder when the Hungarian player Puskás scored a goal that was disallowed because of an offside.

'Off! Off! Out! The game is over. Germany are world champions!' Announced the commentator. Hedi fell around his neck and he high fived his fellow students. From behind, Greta tapped his shoulder.

'Congratulations! You won the bet,' she said.

'Yeah, and what do I win?' asked Conny.

'Can you walk me home?'

'Sure,' he replied, unsure of himself but happy, nonetheless. Maybe their friendship could finally be rekindled.

In the meantime, it had started raining cats and dogs in Heidelberg, too. Everyone who could was disappearing under an umbrella, while others ran or stood in the doorways of houses, hoping that the rain would stop soon. Conny didn't care at all about the rain. And he felt that Greta didn't care, either, because she strolled slowly beside him, unphased, as if the sun were shining. She didn't speak a word, and he didn't want to say anything either, for fear he might say the wrong thing. When they got to the middle of the *Alte Brücke*, she stopped. They were both soaking wet.

'What do you actually want your future to look like?' she asked.

Conny thought about it. Should he tell her that he hoped his uncle would finally be released from captivity so they could set up a practice together? Or that he sometimes thought about working in a hospital, an environment he loved because he loved to be there when children were born?

'I want to have a family. Lots of children!' he blurted out.

'Okay,' said Greta, wiping the raindrops from her face, grinning at him cheekily.

He was confused. What could she possibly mean by 'okay'?

'That's what I want too,' she said and took his hand.

pp. 341-346

[Summer 1961 - Summer 1964 – Kennedy comes to Cologne, Henk is conceived, and an Auschwitz victim shows up as a patient]

'I'll wear your dress on Sunday. President Kennedy is coming then. And I'm going to go to Cologne with Mum to see him,' Helga said proudly, brushing some Sinalco onto her cake. 'Why don't you come along with us, Mrs Monderath?'

Greta's immediate reaction was that she didn't want to. But then Helga added how pleased she would be if Greta came. She considered it – Konrad had written in the Spar own-brand calendar in the kitchen that he was working all weekend, and it would probably do her some good to have some company. So she forced herself to change her mind. 'Yes, why not.'

Early in the morning of 23rd June, Helga and Mrs Overbeck picked her up and together they took the crowded tram across the city border to Cologne. Because the *Deutz* Bridge was closed to traffic, they had to walk several kilometres, past people lining the streets and others standing expectantly at their windows or on balconies. The Rhine bridge was decorated with American and red-and-white Cologne flags. They found a spot there, squeezing themselves into the first row. When all the Cologne church bells began to ring, all the people behind the barriers pulled out the flags they

had brought with them. Greta's heart beat a little faster when she saw the convoy of white-clad policemen on motorbikes from a distance, riding in formation in front of the open-topped car in which the young president was standing next to the almost ninety-year-old Adenauer. Helga twirled her flags and shrieked. So loudly that the beaming Kennedy turned his head and looked at her for a split second.

'Oh, did you see that, Mrs Monderath? He looked at me!' Helga cried, close to fainting, and Greta took her in her arms for a moment. That's my Mariele's president, she thought, tears springing into her eyes.

'The open-topped 300 SL Mercedes carrying John F. Kennedy and Chancellor Adenauer has now arrived in front of the historic *Rathaus*!' the reporter shouted through the radio over the cheering of the crowds.

'Where is the donor?' asked Conny.

Miss Potthoff turned down the radio, and the ringing of the bells could no longer be heard through the speaker, instead coming from outside the practice, through the tilted window. 'He didn't show up,' she whispered worriedly.

'I don't believe it!' raged Drickes.

'Maybe he's stuck somewhere. They said on the radio that there are four hundred thousand people in the city.'

'First the underground construction work causing chaos with the traffic and now this damned Kennedy. It's his fault we don't have any fuel, anyway.' Drickes' carotid artery swelled dangerously. He went into the kitchen and poured himself a glass of water so that he could take his blood pressure pill.

'We'll just have to send the patients home,' said Conny, who had followed him to the kitchen

'One of them has come all the way from the Netherlands. You can't be serious!'

'Well, what do you suggest?'

'We'll just have to take her on anyway.'

'Come on, now *you* can't be serious!'

'Don't make such a fuss, Conny. Everyone has to sacrifice things for the continuation of humanity. For the elite to continue reproducing.'

Outside, Miss Potthoff has turned the radio up again to hear the President's speech in front of the *Rathaus*. 'May I greet you with the old Rheinish swing, Kölle Alaaf.' The spectators cheered frenetically.

'Come on, Conny. Three, two, one,' said Drickes.

Six weeks later, Mrs van Dongen sent them a letter saying that all future appointments could be cancelled because she had high hopes. The bill had long since been settled and a photo of the patient, who was born on 10th March 1964 and whom

the van Dongens had named Henk, lay in the drawer with the others. The patients were now Erna Filthaut, Gertrud Flick, Annemie Wallraff. And Elsa Bauer.

Frau Bauer was a difficult case for Conny because the X-rays of her fallopian tubes were showing something he'd never seen before, in all his years as a doctor.

'I'd like to call in my colleague, if you'll allow me.'

He took the X-rays to his uncle and discussed the case with him. 'The fallopian tubes seem to be blocked. I don't think there's anything we can do about it. Right?'

'Let me take a look.'

Conny went back into the treatment room and told Mrs Bauer that his very experienced colleague would examine her in a moment. He asked her to undress again and take a seat in the gynaecological chair.

Elsa Bauer stared at the ceiling, forcing herself to stay calm as she heard the door open and the other doctor entering. She closed her eyes, trying to dream herself away – into a mossy forest, maybe – so that treatment wouldn't be so unpleasant. The two doctors spoke to each other, pushing something inside her. She clenched her fists and squeezed her eyes shut, trying to hide her pain.

'This is a very interesting case,' the older doctor said, and her pulse began to race.

Then Dr Monderath told her that she could get dressed again. She took her legs off the supports of the gynaecological chair, opened her eyes and straightened up. That's when she noticed who the second doctor was. Those glasses. Those eyes. When he spoke again, she didn't hear any words, only his voice. She knew for sure that he was the man who had stood next to the devil in white in Auschwitz. His henchman. And Elsa Bauer lost all control over her body, starting to shake violently.

'Calm down, ma'am,' said the younger doctor.

She couldn't be there for a second longer. She jumped from the chair and fled into the changing room, shaking so much that she could barely get dressed. She felt as if she were dead, as if all colour had drained from the world.

As she hurried past the receptionist, she tried to say something. But the words wouldn't leave her throat. It was as if her voice wasn't hers to use.

'What on earth was that about? asked Drickes.

'Some broads really like to overreact, don't they?'

Conny heard Frau Bauer hurriedly leave the practice. He was confused: he'd seen her a little anxious before, but never so panicky.

Three days later, when he was standing in front of the bathroom mirror, shaving, the door was suddenly yanked open.

'The police are outside!' Greta shouted, wearing only her pale-yellow dressing gown, and disappeared into the hallway.

'What?' Conny wiped the foam from his face with a towel and hurried to the kitchen window.

'They're here for Uncle Drickes!' she cried, agitated.

Conny watched as two policemen escorted his uncle to the green and white bathtub – that's what they called the Ford Taunus. As Drickes struggled, they twisted his arms behind his back and handcuffed him.

Barefoot, wearing nothing but a pair of tracksuit bottoms and a vest, Conny stormed out of the flat, followed by Greta.

By the time they had arrived downstairs, the car was disappearing round the bend.

'What happened?' asked fifteen-year-old Helga, who was on her way to school.

'I don't know, my child,' Conny heard Greta say.

pp. 486-494

[1977-1997 – Young Tom falls in love. While in Auschwitz with his class, he realises that his uncle was a Nazi doctor and criminal.]

From then on, Tom often tried out his new skills – mostly unsuccessfully. He made out with Susi and Bea from the parallel class, tried to feel up Petra and tried to sleep with Isabel after a party. But that didn't go so well, and she ended up giving him a long lecture about AIDS when it transpired that he didn't have a condom. Stupid cow, Tom thought, he found Isa boooooring anyway. Just like her lecture.

And then *she* came. Tall, with long blond hair, graceful movements and a deep voice. The new teacher.

'Good afternoon. My name is Marion Berl.'

It was love at first sight for Tom. What luck that he had signed up for the history advanced course, even though he didn't give a shit about it. He had picked something at random. It could have been any other subject!

The boys from the back row were fighting for a seat at the front. Tom prevailed and, from then on, sat opposite her. Marion Berl with her beautiful hands, her long neck and her upturned lips. He didn't care that for the next few weeks they would be dealing with National Socialism, a topic they'd done to death, as if there was nothing else worth learning. They even covered it in German class. But Tom would have even learned Paul Celan's 'Death Fugue' by heart, or recited 'So Many Stars' ten times over for Frau Berl.

'It's nice that you're so interested in this subject, Tom,' she told him one day, at a meeting with the committee preparing the school trip to Auschwitz, something he'd signed up for hoping to spend more time with her.

He breathed in her velvety perfume. His heart galloped. 'You can use 'Du' with me, I don't mind!' Tom wanted her to speak to him as if they were equals. He looked into her deep blue eyes. Only for a second, for he was afraid he would drown in them.

Then the others came in.

Whether they should go by bus or by train or plane was the first question on their minds.

'Definitely bus!' said Tom. He had come up with a number of arguments pro-bus, but they were all pretexts, really, because he imagined that the long-distance bus promised the greatest possible proximity to Frau Berl.

Various hotel brochures in Krakow made the rounds, an itinerary was worked out and finally the dates were set.

Tom let his hair grow out, showered twice a day and listened to only one song, over and over: 'Für Immer', or 'Forever', by *Die Ärzte*. He fell asleep to this song and woke up to it. He had recorded it on an audio cassette so that he didn't have to rewind it all the time. Twenty-four times on each side. He lay awake for nights, seeing Marion before him with eyes deeper, so much deeper, than the sea. And with lips as soft as velvet.

And because you're so far away, I kiss you in my dreams, Farin Urlaub sang.

Tom pressed his pillow against him, thinking of her body. He so badly wanted to touch it. *Forever, forever*. And he counted the weeks, the days, the hours.

'Forgetting something?' his mum asked. He shook his head.

She slipped him a fifty-mark note and went up on her tiptoes to stroke his hair, which was already almost two centimetres long.

'Let me drive you,' his father said.

'You don't have to do that,' Tom said, realising that his father had never even seen his high school, let alone been near it.

'Yes, I do!' said Konrad.

They sat next to each other in the car, in silence. It was only when they saw the bus parked in the schoolyard that Konrad broke his silence: 'You'll definitely need to be brave when you're in Auschwitz.'

Tom got out, and as he was heaving the travel bag out of the boot, his father stretched out his arms and hugged him into his chest. 'Have a good trip, Tömmes!'

Tom was slightly taken aback. He couldn't remember the last time his father had hugged him.

On the bus he sat in the second row. Right behind Frau Berl. Of course.

And in the *Hotel Wyspiański* in Krakow he made sure to be staying in the same

corridor as her. The idea that only a wall separated them almost drove him mad. *I dream of you. I love you. Forever. Forever.*

No matter what he did, he was always looking out for her. In the breakfast room, he registered that she was drinking tea and lots of orange juice, and he imagined how he would one day bring her breakfast in bed. On a tour of the city, he had no eyes for the market square, *Wawel* Castle, the old town or the former Jewish ghetto. He only had eyes for her, watching as she bought souvenirs and books. When he saw her struggling with her heavy bag, he offered to help her. And he didn't care that his classmates made fun of him. He didn't care about anything. All he cared about was the fact that she still wouldn't call him by his first name or address him with 'Du'. She just used 'Sie' for him, like she did everyone else.

'What you will see and experience tomorrow is probably worse than anything you have ever encountered in your life. I want you to know that I am here for you. And remember that no question is a silly question,' Frau Berl told the class the evening before their trip.

Tom knew exactly what kinds of questions he wanted to ask her. But he also knew that he couldn't ask those kinds of questions tomorrow – now there was a different topic on the agenda.

No one spoke a word as they entered the camp. It was so much bigger than Tom had imagined, terrifyingly big. On a three hour long guided tour, they were shown the main camp with its never-ending barbed wire fences. In Block Five he saw what he had seen in a film years before: the showcases with mountains of suitcases, glasses, hair. It was not just an image, it was reality. He was finally starting to understand the sheer scale of the Holocaust: more than one million Jews and Sinti and Roma systematically murdered.

'And yet this is only a fraction,' said Frau Berl. Then Tom saw the shoes. Children's shoes, dusty and dirty. He felt as if he could see their former owners bouncing, running, stumbling. This had happened fifty years ago and yet it was still so very close.

Long wooden barracks in Birkenau, with three-storey wooden cots to the right and left, on which more people were housed than originally intended. Crammed together, they waited here for the gas chambers, which, like the crematoria, are still, to this day, silent witnesses to the killing. Standing in such a place, where so many people were murdered, a place soaked in hatred, despair and fear, brought tears to Tom's eyes. He couldn't and wouldn't take photos of what he was seeing like many of his classmates were – the images would be burned into his memory forever, anyway.

At the end of the tour, they stood in Birkenau in front of the so-called *Judenrampe*.

'Here, doctors decided who was fit for work and who would be sent directly to the gas chamber,' said Frau Berl.

Doctors, Tom thought, shaking his head, relieved that his father was too young to have been here. At least there was that.

On the bus back to Krakow, everyone was quiet as a mouse. All the students were lost in their own thoughts. After dinner, Frau Berl suggested that they all sit down in a small adjoining room to talk, or even to be silent together.

Not everyone went along, some retreated to their rooms. 'Do you mind if we have some wine?' Tom asked Frau Berl.

'Of course not. Only if I get to have some too,' she grinned at him, and for the first time in hours he wasn't thinking about the horror that he'd witnessed today. He went and ordered three bottles of red wine for everyone from the waiter. He still hadn't spent a penny of his Mam's extra pocket money, after all.

'How can you just kill children?' asked Bea as he returned.

'How could the SS just sit there, listening to the victims scream in the gas chambers?' Isa wanted to know. 'What kind of people were they?'

The uncorked bottles were brought in and placed in the middle. Everyone poured some for themselves and passed the glasses around.

'I wonder how doctors could reconcile that with their oath,' Tom said, taking a first sip.

'That's an interesting point,' Frau Berl explained. 'There were lots of well-known doctors working at Auschwitz in particular.' She told about Josef Mengele, who was employed as a camp doctor in Birkenau, who carried out the selections, who supervised the gassing of the victims, carrying out inhumane medical experiments on prisoners. He collected material and conducted studies on twin research, growth anomalies, bone marrow transplants, sterilisation methods and the treatment of malaria and typhus. 'But he wasn't the only one involved. And block ten housed women who were systematically rendered infertile.'

Tom had never heard the term *Negative Bevölkerungspolitik*, or Negative Population Policy, which the teacher explained afterwards.

'The Nazis not only killed so-called "worthless" people, but they also took preventive action,' she continued, telling them about Professor Carl Clauberg, the gynaecologist who had sent Himmler his plans to sterilise men with X-rays and women with an injection of stimulating fluid. He was given his own department for this purpose at Auschwitz-Birkenau in the autumn of 1942. The necessary drugs and X-ray contrast media were supplied by the Berlin company *Schering*.

'From 1938 onwards, Clauberg had already tested high-dosage hormone preparations on women without any consideration of casualties. He was even more ruthless in his human trials in the concentration camps.'

'Why do you know so much about this in particular?' asked Tom.

'I came across it while studying. And I just haven't been able to forget about it since. It's a blatant injustice.'

If Tom hadn't already been in love with Frau Berl, he *definitely* would be now. It was so attractive how passionate she was about injustice.

'The women who didn't die from these treatments suffered the consequences for the rest of their lives. They were in excruciating pain, they had purulent infections, they were infertile. And none of the doctors from Block Ten were ultimately held responsible. Companies like *Siemens*, which supplied Clauberg with the X-ray machine, or the pharmaceutical company *Schering*, were never held to account. Not to mention that they still make a lot of money from Clauberg's research today. He's considered the father of the birth control pill.'

Another bottle of wine went round. Tom poured Frau Berl a refill.

'In fact, interestingly, this Clauberg had a Cologne doctor as his right-hand man.'

'Why don't we make that the focus of our course? Surely there were lots of victims from Cologne?' asked Isa.

'That's a great idea!' said Frau Berl and emptied her glass in one go.

Tom was annoyed that he hadn't come up with that idea, because now Isa had all the teacher's attention.

'Off the top of my head, I know of three people involved from Cologne. Two doctors and one victim.' She told them about Herta Oberheuser, who as a doctor in the *Ravensbrück* concentration camp was responsible for human experiments. And of Renée Duering from Braunsfeld, the daughter of a Jewish merchant, who survived Auschwitz and the sterilisation treatment in Block Ten and was one of the few who was not made completely infertile. She had a daughter after the war.

'And then there was Clauberg's right-hand man, Heinrich Pütz. He came from Lindenthal.'

It took a moment for Tom to properly take in what he'd just heard. His thoughts were moving as if in slow motion. Heinrich Pütz... A common name, surely, he thought. It must just be a coincidence.

'Were the two doctors brought to trial?' asked a fellow pupil.

'Herta Oberheuser was. She was the only woman to be accused and sentenced at the Nuremberg Doctors' Trial. And then in terms of Clauberg – he returned from Russian captivity in 1955, the Allies were no longer in charge. The prevailing mood in the newly founded Republic was to look forward instead of backwards. Despite this, the *Zentralrat der Juden,* or the Central Council of Jews, still filed criminal charges against him. But he died in custody before the trial could begin.'

Tom sat there the whole time, shoulders slumped, staring at the floor. What had happened to Pütz? No one was asking. But he had to know. Damn it! He shook himself, and, without looking up, he asked:

'And the other doctor?'

'Pütz?' asked Frau Berl. Tom nodded.

'He was also brought back by Adenauer as part of the *Heimkehr der Zehtausend,*

the Homecoming of the Ten Thousand. He opened a practice in Cologne and was only recognised years later by a patient, someone he'd operated on in Auschwitz. There were no proceedings against him because he was declared "unfit to stand trial". So, he continued to work as a gynaecologist. In a practice on *Rudolfplatz*, actually.'

Uncle Drickes. Onko. Tom began to scratch himself nervously. And suddenly he was no longer part of the action, but an enraptured spectator. He saw his uncle in front of him, how he had always sat at the kitchen table, laughing, giving presents and always making little Tömmes feel very special.

Tom sat down on his hands because he couldn't control the trembling. He was filled with shame and fear, terrified that everything would come out and that he, as a relative, also belonged to the circle of culprits.

'How can that be?' a classmate asked indignantly.

'In the early Federal Republic, there were many medical experts who, as expert witnesses, protected the perpetrators and made it difficult for the victims to get any kind of acknowledgment.'

All the blood, all the warmth suddenly left Tom's body. He froze. The words Frau Berl had read aloud earlier were hammering around his brain. Sentences which Rosa Finkelstein, one of the women from Block Ten, had written to describe her ordeal:

After waking up, I lay on my cot again and nearly bled to death through my abdomen. I was in such terrible pain then, writhing like a snake. I was digging my fingernails into my flesh in pain.

Tom felt everything spinning around him. He felt sick to his stomach. He barely made it to the toilet before throwing up against the wall. Then he crawled up to his room.

'Is everything okay, Tom?' asked Frau Berl through the closed door.

'Yes,' he lied, shivering.

'Is there anything I can do for you?'

He shook his head. He had neither the strength nor the courage to tell her, the most important person to him, the truth.

She knocked again. 'Tom?'

He could have shouted. Torn the door open. He needed her so much! But he gave himself a jolt, took a deep breath and said:

'I just need to sleep.'

The next day, while on the bus back to Germany, he also said that all he needed to do was sleep. The bus wasn't full and so he lay down on the last row of seats and closed his eyes so that he would be left alone. But there was no way he'd be able to sleep. Tom wasn't listening to the chatter of his classmates. And any attempt to escape the horrors of this world with Farin Urlaub failed. The sentences that had until now made him think of his deep feelings for Frau Berl suddenly took on a different meaning.

You don't see me. You don't feel me was now mixed with black and white images

of the railway ramp where the families of the newly arrived Jews were mercilessly torn apart.

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[Present – the circle closes. It is not Konrad (Conny) who is their father, but Nazi criminal Heinrich Pütz (Tom's uncle, otherwise known as Drickes).]

Henk hasn't noticed that the water is boiling. He forgets about the tea and also forgets that he had decided to give Tom the cold shoulder because he'd grown fed up with doing everything on his terms. He looks at Tom with wide eyes.

'Heinrich Pütz, Konrad's uncle. I had him exhumed. It's ninety-nine per cent clear,' Tom tells him.

'That Nazi?'

Tom nods.

Nazi. That word rushes around Henk's mind, stifling all further thoughts. He sits down and is only vaguely aware of Tom brewing tea and placing cups on the table. The silence allows him to begin to process this new information, to once again fill the twice-vacant position of 'father' in his life. This time with Heinrich Pütz, not Konrad.

'And how are you dealing with this, Tom?' he asks at last, when the tea has already become lukewarm.

'As far as the Nazi part is concerned, I'm strangely calm. But what *really* hurts me is that I was never allowed to know about my origins. That my parents – Konrad and Greta, that is – lied to me all these years.'

Henk stands up, walks around the table and takes Tom in his arms. He knows exactly how he feels. What it's like to have no strong foundations, to be standing on quicksand. This embrace gives him support, and Tom as well.

In the evening they stroll through the city. In the past, Henk often imagined what it would be like to show Tom around Amsterdam, around his world. But that's not important now, because his world is now the two of them, nothing outside of that. Nothing else matters.

'And what are we going to do with this information?' asks Henk.

'Jenny and I have come up with two ways to proceed. The first is that we hire someone to compile everything there is to know about Pütz. So that you, I and everyone else he fathered can to find out who he was and what he actually did.' What Tom doesn't tell Henk is that he has already found the perfect person for this job – and has already contacted her, yesterday. Frau Berl. He has to smile thinking about the fact that it definitely gave him a certain satisfaction to learn that her husband – whose name had been added to hers with a hyphen - had vanished into thin air. And it's also crazy that even after thirty years his pulse still quickens at the thought of her.

'Good idea,' Henk says. 'And what was your second thought?'

'Jenny has a colleague who works part-time for her show, tracking down people all over the world. I'd like to hire her to look for more Pütz follow-ups as professionally as possible. You're welcome to stay involved, of course. But Jenny is staying out of it. It's better for us to keep it separate. After all, she's my wife and soon to be the mother of my second child.'

Tom had never slept in a double bed with another man, and certainly not in such a small double. He hesitated for a moment –Henk is gay, after all – but then crawled under the covers with him, feeling quite comfortable. Not completely comfortable, though, because as long as the light is on, every single member of the Dutch royal family is staring at him.

'You've lost it,' Tom says with a laugh, looking at the wall, which is covered from top to bottom photos of the royals. Henk knows everything about them all, from Queen Juliana to her great-grandson Claus-Casimir of Orange-Nassau.

'Maybe he should have a DNA test, too,' Tom quips. 'Because who knows if his grandfather, Prince Claus, was really capable of procreation.'

Henk claps his hands in delight. 'Beatrix was often in Cologne, I heard. Imagine if King Willem-Alexander were our brother.'

'God forbid. Not him, too. One Dutchman in the family is enough,' Tom says, and when Henk turns out the light, the Oranians disappear from his mind.

Neither of them can sleep.

'It's crazy that your mother was right about Konrad being infertile,' Henk muses into the darkness.

Tom says nothing for a long time. He feels a deep longing for his mother, with whom he used to stretch out his legs under the kitchen table after a long shift, and whose unspoken solidarity he has always felt, one hundred percent. Under the cover of darkness, he cries. Quietly. He cries, for the first time, because she is so ill. 'I would give anything to be able to talk to her about it.'

'Oh, Tom.'

'I can't even tell if she knows who I am anymore.'

Henk puts his arm around him and Tom finally lets his tears run free.