

Christian-Lothar Ludwig

Midnight Sun



www.C-L-LUDWIG.com

There are only two ways to live your life.
One is as though everything is a miracle.
The other is as though nothing is a miracle

Albert Einstein

Table of Contents

Chapter 1.....	11
Chapter 2.....	17
Chapter 3.....	26
Chapter 4.....	34
Chapter 5.....	40
Chapter 6.....	47
Chapter 7.....	51

Chapter 1

It was a rough day, a really rough day. One of those days, when made men just drop into bed and fall asleep immediately. A day most people are already fed up by lunchtime and only strive to go home. To me, it was a day just like any other. I've had worse ones before but also many better ones. This day was still special, but I didn't know it yet. I hadn't 't seen it coming; no one could have.

I was almost home in my small apartment in Camden - a beautiful district in London - and could finally get off the stuffy subway, that was simply too overcrowded for such an exceptionally hot summer day. The smell of sweat was omnipresent and mixed with the odor of the old masonry, turning into an undefinable combination. Here, you could observe people from all social classes: From briefcases carrying well-groomed men in suits to transvestites in colorful clothes to heavily pregnant women and punks in dirty and ragged clothes, holding the mandatory beer-bottle in hands. The subway reached my last stop and the doors opened. Without hesitation, a swarm of people stepped and pushed itself along the waiting passengers. I walked past the various people and went straight to the "Way Out" sign, past a street musician, who was trying to earn a few coins in the subway. I climbed the stairs and quickly paid my trip by card. Finally, I could get outside and breathe some fresh air.

It only took five, maybe six minutes to walk from the subway station to my apartment. I enjoyed it as much as possible - the warm breeze blowing around my nose, the loud rock music that appeared to be coming from a crowd across the street and the seagulls, pouncing on the trash bags on the street. London how it lives and moves, nothing unusual but charming in my eyes.

My apartment was in the basement in a colorful painted side street of the High Street. I enjoyed the countless murals that appeared every now and then over-night on the walls and turned the city into a vivid and pretty place. Here, you could breathe life. The city was always noisy and full of impressions from all over the world. I felt comfortable and could easily switch off after a long working day. I was a gravedigger at the Highgate Cemetary.

How I became a gravedigger? A long story. I was born in the northern part of Germany, raised by religious parents in a small village in the middle of nowhere. After finishing secondary school and with a lot of pressure from my parents, I completed my education as a male nurse with honors and worked in the same hospital for a couple of years. However, this was not the life I had intended. I just lived it for the sake of my parents. Initially, I wanted to become an artist or musician. Therefore, I played a lot of guitars, drew a lot and from time to time; I tried my luck as an actor. Yet, my only real part was for the annual theatre in my hometown, directed by the sport shooting club I was a member of. In general, a fairly normal life without any great ups and downs and any significant events. Deep inside of me, I wanted to leave this boredom and the small town I lived in - a whole eleven miles from where I grew up. During the week and often on the weekends, I did my job instead. On off days, I would party till the morning hours, probably to escape my dreary everyday life. I don't know. Here, alcohol and drugs, or rather medicaments were following one another. During work and on the weekends, I was constantly high on something. Since they had given me the key to the medicine cabinet, either the hospital or the stoned boy next door was my dealer. There was not always something available, but I could manage.

My physical appearance was in my opinion average and I definitely didn't look like a model, but girls always took a liking to me. Why? I couldn't even explain to myself. Still, me managing to find a girl, I was interested in for longer than one night, was extremely unusual. The few relationships I committed to usually failed

for my imbalance or the continuously growing lack of interest in my girlfriends. None of them was able to deal with me longer than a couple of months and in hindsight, I can understand each and every one of them.

When once again, after just a couple of weeks, my relationship had hit rock bottom, that ultimately gave me a reason to move away from my hometown and find my luck somewhere else. I've had enough of Germany, wanted to gather new experiences and prove my English skills. I considered various places and finally decided for London. During the summer, the city was simply beautiful and in winter, it was still more pleasant than at home. Indeed, it did rain a lot, but I didn't mind. I preferred sunny days, but I couldn't complain about rain either.

Again, I started to work as a male nurse in a hospital and realized quickly, that the medicine cabinets keeping the good stuff were apparently much more supervised than they were at home. After two weeks and two reminders - I lost my job. In order to afford an apartment and a living, I accepted the first position I could get. Since I didn't want to live off my savings, therefore needed an employment urgently and - as it couldn't get any worse in terms of disgust, after working in the hospital for years - I called the number of the next best job advert in the newspapers and became a gravedigger. Here, the people I had to deal with were at least not choleric and invidious. I didn't have to clean up messes and I've had gotten used to death a long time ago. Disadvantages were the constantly dirty and rough hands and the strange co-workers, that I luckily saw little of during the day. Everyone had his own area, he was responsible for, where everybody worked alone. I either gardened the graveyard and the graves or I dug fresh ones. The money was good, probably because nobody else was interested my job. Well, I loved the peace. Nobody complained and if I wanted to, I could listen to music the entire day. On top of that, I also liked the countless angel statues, that were spread across the graveyard. Somehow, I felt comfortable when one of these stone figurines was close by. This was caused by my parents or at least to me; this was proven. They were relatively religious and I guess this had an impact on me. When I was a child, there were always angel sculptures placed around our house. We also went to church once a week; prayed before going to bed and even before dinner. When I got older and puberty kicked in, I often had arguments about this, especially with my mother. I started to revolt and wanted to do my own thing, away from the church. Just not being the way they were.

In the meantime, I had reached my apartment and, on the staircase, leading down to my front door, I contemplated my day once again. Somehow, this was indeed a harder work day than usual, even though I only scooped out two small holes, right at the end. But it was those two, that made me struggle. The small graves are always the hardest to dig.

I had often experienced the death of children in the hospital, but I never managed to get used to it. As a gravedigger, things didn't get any better - especially when my customer wasn't even five years old. The worst part was to trench the holes right next to each other. They were probably twins, as there was only one mutual birthday written on their wooden cross. Sadly, the mutual day of death of Sarah and Alison Doe was also engraved. I didn't know what had happened, but it must have been a tragedy in any case. I felt incredibly sorry for their family.

Such incidents just brought me even further away from the church. How could a, his own creation loving God let things like this happen? How could he allow the starving of billions or families being split apart, because of death and idiotic wars? To me, this wasn't a loving and caring God. He was spiteful and cruel. This creature seemed to like watching people suffer. For what other reason would he, if he even existed, send an entire planet full of life slowly but steadily into their demise? My grandma often read the bible to me. The few passages I could remember told about suffering and pain only. I couldn't understand any of this; perhaps I simply didn't want to. It just didn't make any sense to me. How could mankind blindly follow a book, written

by people hundreds of years after those events actually took place? How could someone believe in something nobody could see, feel or touch? I rather believed in myself, even though that didn't seem to work as great either. With this thought in mind, I put the key into the apartment door, turned it two times to the left and opened the door.

While entering my flat, an unusual scent reached my nostrils. The smell was familiar and yet so strange - a slight blend of incense and the scent of roses, covered every now and then by an absolutely disgusting stench. Usually, my apartment reeked rather like stale air and cigarette smoke. Since I was living in the basement, airing was unfortunately not effective, as there never was any decent draught. Now, the smell was very peculiar. I didn't think much of it, however - how weird could it be, after all? It was probably just the landlord - maybe he had been in my flat for a moment, checking something. That was very likely the easiest explanation, even though it didn't make any sense.

As calm as always, I took my shoes off, put my cap on the shoe rack next to the entrance and walked to the living room, that served as a passage room in my apartment. The scent kept getting stronger and seemed to come from either my bedroom or the bathroom, right next to it. First, I went to the bath to finally get rid of my contact lenses. In there, everything seemed to be as usual. Within just a few seconds, I had opened the lens box, freed my eyes from the contact lenses and filled up the containers with the solution. With a quick hand movement, I had my glasses on and was already back in the living room.

To figure out the scent's origins, I carefully opened the bedroom door. With each inch, the scent got stronger. This could definitely not be from the landlord; he had probably not even been in my apartment. He also would have told me, if he had needed something.

Since the door opened towards the bed, I couldn't see where the fragrant stench was coming from at first. Only when I stood with one foot in the room, I realized a huge cross with a human silhouette, hanging upside down right above my bed. Some parts were shining and glowing in a bright blue light. At this instant in the dark room, I couldn't identify much, but at a first glimpse, it gave an impression of absolute perfection - it had to be a wooden figure, carved and painted by an artist.

I frightened, stumbled backward out of the room and quickly pulled the door shut. Since the key stuck uncommonly on the outside, I locked the door and thought to myself while panicking: "What is going on? Did someone break in? Did I put the key there? What am I supposed to do? Call the police? Check what happened on my own?" I could feel the adrenalin, rushing through my veins. At the same time, an important consideration came to my mind: "Is there somebody in my apartment?" Quick-thinking, I ran to the kitchen and grabbed the biggest knife I could find with my right hand and the meat hammer with my left. There I stood, my slippers on, armed and terrified. "What is happening? What is going on?" Only these thoughts were pulsating through my head, again and again. Even through the closed bedroom door, the scent of incense and roses had now spread throughout the entire apartment - the disgusting stench was gone already.

For some inexplicable reason, the sweet smell had a calming effect and created an unreal feeling, unknown to me. On the one hand, thoughts were pounding through my head: "If there really is someone - will he attack? That must be a massive psychopath. He will certainly fight back!" On the other hand, I felt comfortable and protected. I couldn't put it in order, didn't know this feeling. To ask for help, I quickly ran to the living room, threw my knife down and reached for the telephone. I called the emergency hotline, but only got a monotonous sound in return: The line was dead. Then I remembered the yellow note I had found in my mailbox a couple of days ago. I had been informed, that they would change some cables and I would not have any stable internet or phone connection in the next few days. Just like life goes, this was the case today. "Did somebody know and made a plan, counting on this?" I pushed the thought aside - I could think about this later. Instead, I reached

for my mobile phone, lying next to the telephone. Without hesitation, I called 112 to get emergency service. "The number you are calling is not available at present.", told me an electronic voice. I immediately got goose-bumps. "What the hell is happening here?" Frantically, I retried the hotline, but got the same answer. "This can't be true!" I panicked and searched my contacts for the phone-number of my only buddy in London. While the connection was building up, I kept mumbling: "Tom, please pick up. Please, please pick up!" - "The number you are calling is not available at present." - "Fuck!" He probably had his mobile turned off, was at work or riding the subway. Clearly, I was on my own.

Since the stench had disappeared, the soothing odor got stronger. It was still not overpowering but pleasant instead. "What's left to do now?", I wondered. "Running out to the street and yelling for help? Definitely not!" There was only one thing to do: Open the bedroom door, hope for the best and be prepared for the worst. I put my phone into my pocket, grabbed the knife and sneaked to my bedroom door.

While pulling on the handle, I carefully turned the key to the right, to make the least sound possible. After an almost inaudible "click", the door was unlocked. Still, I cursed the muffled sound. But maybe I was lucky and the intruder hadn't heard a thing. The bedroom was facing the street and London was as loud as usual on this afternoon. On the other hand, he might know I was about to enter the room. He could definitely not escape from the bedroom. The windows were way too small.

I turned the doorknob, opened the door a few inches and kicked it in best action movie manner open. For all I knew, the intruder might be standing right behind it. The door swung fully open and rammed the knob into the wardrobe; I had built up right on the adjoining side. The scent of incense and roses overwhelmed me.

I peered through the gap between the door and the frame, but couldn't identify anything unusual. As nobody was hiding in the small area, I took a step into the room. Crouching and with the utmost caution, I gazed along the front of the wardrobe. "There's nobody!", I whispered and further deliberated: "Either he's in the wardrobe or lying between the bed and the wall, facing the street." Momentarily, I felt even more adrenaline circulating through my veins and my pulse shooting up. I could feel the throbbing in my throat.

My huge sliding door cabinet was easily capable of hiding two people. They were probably necessary to move this man-sized wooden figure. However, the doors were heavy and could only be opened using force. From the inside and without a handle, it probably could only be opened slowly and with great effort. Confident and with a loud scream, I jumped to the center of the room, right in front of my bed. This way, I could check the gap between the bed and the wall. I held the knife firm and ready for piercing and swung the meat hammer above my head. In the corner of my eyes, behind the raised foot of my bed, I encountered two large white objects and a bright spot in the middle. In addition, I was finally able to recognize the carving better. It reminded me of a picture from a book I had discovered in my grandmother's attic as a child. Countless years had passed since the last time I had seen the drawing, but I could remember the title as if it was yesterday: "St. Peter's Cross".

As I could not identify anyone between the bed and the wall and it was impossible to hide under one of the mattresses. There was not even enough room for a shoe box. So, I turned my back to the cross and checked the last possibility: the closet.

I started on the left side and took a deep breath. Without turning my gaze from the wardrobe, I put the hammer down at the flattened foot part of the bed and laid the knife in my left hand. Then I pushed the closet door a powerful jerk aside and took a small step backward. At the same time, I prepared for combat and released a fighting cry in the direction of the dresser. I held the knife with a firm grip and was ready to fight anything, that might come at me. After the door had burst against the other side of the cabinet, I quickly checked the contents. Nothing, except for a bit of linen. The smell of stale air was released into my face but disappeared

within a few breaths - overpowered by the rose scent. So, I pushed the door back to its original position and checked the other side of the cabinet. First, I put the knife back into my right hand and grabbed the hammer with the left. My heart was pounding faster and faster. There were no other possibilities – the intruder had to be in this half of the wardrobe. The wildest thoughts went through my head while I inhaled and exhaled furiously: "Is this just a prank? Am I part of some sick TV show?" I positioned myself slightly to the right of the closet and pushed the door with my foot forcefully aside. With a loud scream and my weapons in combat position, I expected someone to jump at me. However, the sliding door crashed in the other side and the room went quiet again. Except for my clothes, there was nothing and nobody in the closet.

My apartment was save and I took a deep breath. I inhaled the scent deeply and when I exhaled, I could feel a load being taken off my shoulders. Finally, I could inspect the cross and whatever was laying on the bed.

At first, I had problems to perceive the exact outlines in the not well-lit room. I shut my eyes halfway, blinked a couple of times and gave them more time to adjust. Then, I inhaled in shock, my heart skipped a beat and I jumped a step back. This was not a wooden figure! This was a beautiful woman in a white, sleeveless dress, hanging upside down from my wall!

Someone had crucified her with huge nails that had been driven through her floor-length dress and her feet. Her arms were spread out and fixed through her wrists using the same spikes. Her throat was cut open deeply and her torso was injured on the right side. Here, you could see a crack with a bluish colored edge in the dress and a bright blue shine coming from the wound beneath it. In order to support the body, two nails had been driven through the shoulders. These two protruded a bit out of the body, while the others were even aligned inside the skin. Those spikes, however, were not from the hardware store. They were handmade. I had seen a blacksmith craft similar ones on a medieval market a few years ago. This kind of thumb-thick steel spikes couldn't be bought anywhere.

The beautiful face was distorted by symbols, scribed in both cheeks and the forehead. The deep blue eyes were wide open and stared into space. Her lips were crimson and shortly drew my attention to the small mouth. Scratched up to the bone, there was an upside-down cross on the forehead and someone had cut two symbols, I had never seen before, into the cheeks. These figures consisted of straight lines of different lengths. All of them cut together in one point. The wounds on her face did not bleed, but only radiated a bluish light. I had seen a lot in my career as a nurse, but here, I had to pull myself together to not black out. The shock stroke deep inside of me - I couldn't explain why.

The huge wound on the neck was - from all injuries - the largest source of the blue light. The head probably hung only on the spine and supported itself on the wall - a few inches, from where my head had been resting the night before. In addition to the radiant light, a bluish fluid rinsed from the gaping wound. The liquid ran down her chin, past the mouth and across her face. From there, it poured its way across the temple and along the half-curved blond hair onto my pillow. My eyes followed the trickle to the middle of my bed, where a small puddle had formed. This also shone, but with far less radiance than the wound itself. On the right and left side of the puddle, two large objects were laid out. They looked like oversized wings and had some resemblances to those of birds, but were much more muscular. The feather structure was almost perfect and only a few of the snow-white feathers were missing. On the wings, you could recognize upper-arm-thick joints, probably used to move them and fly. Directly at the down-covered joint, you could be certain - those wings had been ripped from their former position. Torn muscles and tendons hung down. The stumps were smeared with the blue fluid. Even someone without a medical background could easily guarantee, that this was the result of raw violence. In spite of the brutality, the interplay of the blue light and the white wings - in contrast to my black linen - gave the impression of a piece of art. Out of nowhere and like an inspiration, a

voice echoed through my mind: "*Archangel Haniel is dead.*" Tears shot up my eyes, everything went black and I collapsed.

Chapter 2

The room was dark when I gained my conscious back. Only the sparse lighting of the street lamp that stood in front of my house penetrated through the windows. I was laying on the carpet and slowly opened my eyes. Instantly, I sat up and gazed into the void at the bottom of my bed for a few seconds. "Why am I on the floor?", was my first attempt of sorting my memories. "An Archangel is dead!", popped up in my brain immediately and after a few moments, I remembered, I had simply broken down. "What happened? How long have I been laying here? What day is it today?", were the next thoughts, whipping through my synapses. I pulled my phone out of my pocket, pressed the home button and checked the way too bright display with half-closed eyes. It was still Friday, but meanwhile 11:11 o'clock in the evening. Besides, I had two missed calls from Tom. He had probably gotten the notification about my call. "Have I really spent the last six hours unconscious on the floor?", I said rather quiet and somewhat doubtful to myself. "Did I fall on my head? Why do I have a headache?" All my life, I never knew this feeling. Even after long nights out and with a huge hangover, I was untainted by this issue. My pain did also not concern my whole skull but was explicit in my forehead, right in the middle of my eyes. I blinked a few times vigorously and shook my head. Then I took a few deep breaths, lifted the knife and the meat hammer off the ground and while heaving a groan, I put myself back on my feet.

Glumly, I gazed at the head of my bed. She was still hanging on the wall, staring into space with her beautiful, dead eyes. I shook my head, turned around and went to the kitchen. I needed water and felt parched. Carelessly, I threw the butcher's hammer and the knife on the kitchenette and took a bottle of mineral water from the fridge. I almost emptied it halfway in one go, while trying to explain to myself what had happened in my apartment. "Is this really an angel on my wall?" I contemplated silently. "Where does the name Haniel come from, I have never heard it!", I continued to speak to myself: "Who can help me now? Should I ask the police or a priest for help? "

So, I stood in my small kitchen - puzzled and holding the almost emptied bottle in hand. A few minutes passed and I didn't come to any conclusion. In any case, I had an indescribable reverence for this woman. Perhaps you could call it sympathy; I didn't know.

The fragrance of incense and roses had meanwhile disappeared and the apartment smelled like mine again. To clear my mind, I fished a box of cigarettes from my kitchen drawer, opened it and put one in my mouth. While searching for a lighter, I stumbled into the living room, where I always kept one next to the ashtray on the coffee table. I lit the cigarette and inhaled vigorously. The smoke penetrated my lungs and I immediately felt the relaxing effect of nicotine on my brain. "Why am I so calm, in spite of the incidents?", I puzzled, while I dropped myself onto the couch and wrote a text-message to Tom: "Hey dude, how are you? Are you still awake?" After completing the text, I hit the send button and drew the cigarette-smoke deep into my lungs. Suddenly, there was this voice in my head again, like out of nowhere: "*He can't help.*"

I jumped from the couch, hit my knee hard against the coffee table and pushed it into the direction of the TV. "Who's there?", shot out of my mouth and with panic in my eyes, I turned around my own axis and checked the room. "There is no one; you are alone!", I heard myself mumbling and exhaled calmly. "I should probably be put into a sanatorium!", I concluded in thought. "Does something like this happen to others and they just don't talk about it?", was my next consideration, but I knew it myself: I was trying to downplay the situation. While I stubbed the cigarette out in the ashtray, I was startled by the loud tone of an incoming text message. Tom answered: "Hey man, sure I'm awake. I'm on the High street with my chef, sitting in a pub. Why did you call?" – "Did I want to tell him at all?"

He was a few years older and operated a small snack bar at the Camden Market, that offered all sorts of German cuisine. His shop was definitely not running well and the competition was tough, but he earned enough to afford a nice life in London. Actually, he was a trained butcher from a small nest near the Austrian border and had the proverbial Bavarian coziness like no one else I knew - for nothing and no one could stress him. In my situation, I was not too certain.

We met for the first time when I hungrily strolled around the market during my first week in London. I descried his sign with the big, orange imprint "German Bratwurst" and reflexively ordered in German: "curry-sausage, fries, red'n white!". He was surprised and started to laugh; I blushed and, in the end, we became friends. We just clicked. As a joke, he called it a Bromance. For my part, I was just happy I had found someone I could get along with easily. When we were drunk, we always called each other the "brother from another mother". In my eyes he was a good guy, but what would he say to the dilemma in my bedroom?

I answered him to drop by when he had the chance and told him I had nothing important. While I put my phone back in my pocket, my eyes fell on the DVD player. Meanwhile, it was 11:44 p.m. and thus ghost hour soon. I had never wasted a thought about that, but today, I was somehow not comfortable thinking of midnight. Nevertheless, I had other problems. "What am I going to do with the corpse?", popped into my head. "Is it wise to call the police?", I asked myself next and immediately answered the question: "It will probably be for the best!" Reflexively I grabbed my phone, went on redial and tried to reach the emergency hotline again. "The number you are calling is not available at present.", echoed from the speaker. "What the fucking hell is going on here?", I whispered to myself and simply threw the telephone next to me onto the sofa. This couldn't be true. I obviously couldn't rely on any help from the police, at least this seemed to be proven. Instantly, I lit another cigarette, inhaled deeply and let myself sink further into the couch.

The blue haze slowly filled the room and sustained me to relax. My headache had almost disappeared by now and I had only a slight throbbing left in my forehead. Somehow, I longed for the rose scent, but through the blue smoke I blew into the apartment, it seemed to be gone permanently. Minute after minute, I simply sat on my couch, thinking about my next step, until I felt a short draught going down my spine. This sparked a tingling sensation on my skin and my thoughts changed abruptly: "What do angel's wings feel like?", urged into my thoughts. I drew nervously on my cigarette. What was going on inside of me? I felt like this drought was to blame for my curiosity. From one second to the other, I felt the need to touch the feathers. I wanted to know, how they would feel, sliding through my fingers. How supple they would glide through my hand and slip back into position with an inconspicuous wiggle. With each breath, the desire got stronger and my next step was crystal clear to me.

Without hesitation, I got up and went straight to the bedroom. With the cigarette casually stuck in the corner of my mouth, I ran to my side of the bed. When I was in place, I threw the butt into one of the countless plastic bottles, standing beside my sleeping place. Then, I directed my full attention to the angel's wings.

In front of me, the – presumably - right wing was laid out. The outer side was laying upwards; with the joint pointing towards the head of the angel. Full of expectations, I lifted my eyes up at Haniel. At this point, her sight wasn't bad anymore; she even radiated a peaceful impression. Her face was stunning and the curded blood only amplified the scene. It couldn't have been more beautiful, if someone had painted this image.

Excited but slowly, I stretched my hand towards the untainted wing. At first, I only touched the feathers with my forefinger. They felt exceptional soft and silky – I had never touched anything similar and felt like I was in trance. For a brief moment I forgot the rest of the world. For a single second, there was only me and the

absolute perfection, these wings radiated upon me. I was completely immersed in thought when my doorbell suddenly rang storm. With a bang, I was catapulted back into the real world.

"Who the fuck is that - this late - like crazy?", shot into my head. As if stung by a tarantula, I fled out of the bedroom and pulled the door shut on my way out. With a few quiet steps, I was at the front door already. On tiptoe and with a flat feeling in my stomach, I slowly moved my eye towards the peephole. Who could it be? "I hardly get guests, especially not that late!", rattled through my brain. Perhaps my nightly visit had something to do with the dead body in my bedroom? I risked a glimpse and exhaled calmly.

Tom waited in front of my door, lurching and with a six-pack of beer in hand. He was staggering, as he always did when he had too much to drink. I was glad; he had dropped by this late and welcomingly, I opened the door and greeted him with a nod: "Hey Tom, how are you?" - "I've had too many car bombs!", echoed back. "Can I sleep at yours? I brought breakfast, too!" During this sentence, he pointed his index finger at the six-pack in his other hand. I laughed, but reflected the situation: "Sleeping at my place would be a problem, although crashing on my couch wouldn't be unusual." Sanctimonious, I went on: "Just come in! How did you get wasted so fast? We texted - thirty minutes ago?" As he crept past me, he murmured: "I won a bet!" - "What was it about?", I replied impassively. "Drinking! Who can finish three car bombs faster? My chef went straight home afterwards - loser!", he grinned while saying these words. "But - he paid the bill!", my best friend declared proudly and his grin became even wider. "Is your snack bar closed tomorrow or what's going on?", I snouted. "I don't have to be in the store until 11:00 am!", he countered. "All clear, take a seat! Do you prefer some water?", I kindly asked him, but he threw himself onto the couch with a loud: "Yes, please. Maybe you can bring me a towel, also - so I can wash my feet, the fuck?! We're having a beer!" I smiled and opened two cans with a clicking sound. On the one hand, him being in my apartment was uncomfortable to me. There was hell going on in my bedroom, literally. On the other hand, I was happy I could rely on him and knowing, he was there at all times felt great. However, I was still hoping he would make it home.

I sat down on the sofa and we started talking about the few days. Tom always liked to tell stories about the craziest customers he served. His highlight this week was an elderly lady, that ordered her sausage "medium rare". I almost spat my beer out with laughter. Unfortunately, I had no entertaining stories in stock and only recounted my quiet week at the cemetery. The secret in my bedroom, I kept to myself. As time passed chatting, we casually emptied two cans of beer and smoked many cigarettes. With every sip Tom took, I could observe him, starting to squint more and more. After he had emptied his second can, he swung up babbling and grunting at me: "I have to use the bathroom, would you get the last two cans, please?" With these words, he set off in the direction of the toilet. Full of good humor I jumped from the couch and marched towards the kitchen.

While on my way, I encountered Tom from the corner of my eye, staggering and instead of using the right door to the bathroom, he ripped open the door to my bedroom. I had a short moment of fright and before I could say anything, he had already disappeared into the room. The blood froze in my veins. "Shit! Shit! Shit!", I thought to myself. In a hurry, I had forgotten to lock the door! Like so often I mumbled a quiet: "Fuck!", while I pulled my head into my neck and expected a scream. However, my flat remained silent and I could only hear faint murmurs: "Sorry, I'm probably wrong here." - "Who was he talking to?" I immediately went after him and turned on the light in the room.

The crucified Archangel was still hanging on my wall, easy to observe. Tom stood in front of my bed and needed a sidestep, since he couldn't keep his balance properly. Anyway, he had to see Haniel - she could not be overlooked. I was perplexed and asked hypocritically: "Do you notice anything in here?" - "Sure, I'm not in the bathroom!", he answered with a mocking undertone. "Don't worry; I'm not going to piss anywhere!", he

added with a drunken smile. "You should buy yourself a new blanket; yours is losing tons of feathers! That looks so stupid on the black linen!" He pointed to my bed, where the wings were still on show, at least to me.

„You... You see a couple of downs and nothing else?", I stammered in his direction. "Yes, sure. What else? Am I wasted or are you?", I received in a sarcastic tone. "What are you talking about anyway?", he continued. My stomach turned inside out and my heart slipped into my pants. "What's the matter with me?", hammered through my skull. "Just a few downs on the bed." I kept repeating the words in my mind: "Just a few downs. Just a few downs."

The lifeless body could not be overlooked, so there was only one explanation: Haniel was invisible to Tom. The doubt about my own state of mind got stronger and I had to digest the confusion, Tom had created, first. But since I didn't want him to notice anything, I put on a forced smile and replied: "Oh, nothing, just forget it." I expressed these words as calmly as I could. Still - inside of me - my mind revolved: "What if I'm really not sane? What if everything is just my imagination and the wall is actually empty?" During this thought, further deliberations popped up in my head: "*Why do the feathers feel so good?*" It was like someone just squeezed a certain idea into my brain - I couldn't resist it. Without any warning, a completely different sentiment came up: "*That's all in your head!*" Tom looked at me with confused eyes, shrugged his shoulders and murmured: "I really have to take a leak, let me pass, please." With these words, he made his way out of the room. However, something unusual had happened inside of me. I felt as if Angel and Devil had really appeared on my shoulders and fought for my consciousness.

Tom had disappeared and I could hear him, using the toilet. I still stood petrified in front of my bed and gazed at the angel. "Am I crazy?", I whispered. The flushing noise coming from the bathroom - somehow - sounded like a confirmation. I shook myself, left the room and went to the refrigerator, to get the last cans of beer. As soon as I sat on the couch, I was contemplating again: "I have a sunstroke - that's it - probably!" There had to be a plausible explanation for the incident. "No one turns crazy in one day!" I probably tried to sugarcoat it.

All of a sudden, Tom burst into my thoughts: "Hey man, I think I'm done and better head home. It's already past one. Actually, I wasn't planning on staying this long. You know, I have to get up tomorrow." I checked the DVD player - it was 1:11 am. "Okay, I'll go to bed, too!", I replied - although I couldn't even think about sleeping.

Within seconds, Tom was already wearing his sweater. He was drunker than I thought and needed another sidestep to avoid falling over. Immediately, I started to grin and followed him to the front door. We said good-bye and within the blink of an eye, he had disappeared onto the streets. I shut the front door and went as the crow flies to the bedroom - to keep going, where I had left off.

I put myself back next to my bed and knelt my left foot on it. Carefully, I touched the wings with my index finger, this time not so timid, but still cautious. The feathers felt stunning. Immediately, the wing casted a spell over me and I let the back of my hand slip over it. Then, I proceeded up the swing and a shiver ran down my spine. But, this was anything, but a bad feeling. I rather felt, as if all tension in my body had vanished in the blink of an eye. My left hand went on and the right one followed. With every inch I approached the joint, the shiver became more powerful and intense. My whole body was quivering with emotions and I felt like my soul was joyfully bouncing up and down, as if I had found something long lost. As if I was dealing with something, I had never expected to get back. At the same time, a breeze of rose fragrance made its way into my nose and the soothing feeling of the afternoon was back. The longer I touched the wings, the more daring I became. After only a few seconds, I had gathered enough courage to touch the angel herself. I lifted the wing in front of me

and put it carefully on top of the other. I meticulously took care, not to immerse the white feathers in the bluish puddle nor to only touch a feather with the smeared joint.

As soon as I had this done, I knelt my left foot closer to the angel. My hand moved slowly upwards, to the lifeless body of Haniel. Within these moments, an irresistible desire had come up inside of me. I needed to know what the skin of this delicate being felt like. I remembered a holiday in Australia, when I swam with dolphins for the first time. Back then, I was young and quite afraid to touch the animals. It cost me a lot of overcoming to finally do it. In the end, it was simply amazing and an unforgettable experience. With these thoughts, I paused just before Haniel's face and examined the body once more. The angel was slightly glowing in the beautiful light, again. It seemed to me, as if I was doing the right thing, but even if it wasn't right, I didn't care. I had to touch her.

So, I started to stroke along her upper arm with four fingers. Her skin felt tender and supple, as if she was not from this world. To my astonishment, she was not cold but warmer than room temperature. Lost in thought, my hand caressed along her arm and slowly approached the face. I left out the neck to not get my fingers into the liquid. Cautiously and without touching the symbols, I fondled her cheek. I felt like I was floating, even though my feet were standing firmly on the ground. To close the angel's eyes, I carefully placed my palm on her delicate eyebrows; planning to stroke along her face. While doing so, I tremendously paid attention to not touch the carved St. Peter's cross.

As soon as I had positioned my hand, my right foot suddenly slipped, as if someone had pulled on it. For a split second, I lost my balance and my upper body fell forward. Reflex-like, I caught most of my weight with my right hand, a bit in front of the wings. But unconsciously, I also pressed the palm of my left hand against Haniel's forehead and covered the carved cross. Immediately, I felt something like an electric shock, shooting along my arm and through my body. As much as I tried, I could not take my hand off the angel, as if I was glued on. Within the blink of an eye, the electrocution reached my head. From that moment, I was no longer capable of any motion and felt a kind of explosion in my skull, especially in my forehead.

Again, a chain of thought was pushed into my consciousness: "*She died for you. Don't let it be in vain!*" Within the fraction of a second, memories of my life appeared to me and I could see myself from an observer perspective. "*Her eyes!*", echoed through my brain cells.

Almost thirty years squeezed into a few seconds revealed before my inner eye. When the pictures passed, I realized: Those were not my memories, but Haniel's. She had been with me and looking after me all my life.

When I was a child and broke my arm, falling from a tree, she was by my side and relieved my pain with an unnoticeable touch. Unfortunately, she was not allowed to prevent me from breaking the bone; her hands were tied. This was an experience, I owed to my soul. I felt it literally in me; she had done her utmost - as always. But there were countless other situations I had never been aware of.

When I was born and my parents brought me home from the hospital - we would have died in a car accident without the assistance of the angel. Haniel's solution was more than impressive. She let a glass bottle slip out of the hand of the driver, who parked his car next to ours. Then she landed one of the shards exactly behind my father's tire. To complete her duty, the angel made my father overlook the issue and ensured he ran over it while maneuvering in the parking lot. Within a few feet, the tire had lost all air and a further journey was impossible. If it wasn't for this breakdown, at the last crossroads, only a few yards from our home, a truck with broken brakes would have collided head on into us. I knew that, without ever happening. Our car would have burst into flames within seconds and no one would have survived. Nevertheless, I observed my father, changing the tire, while loudly swearing in the parking lot. He had no idea how lucky he was.

Haniel was also with me, when I was eighteen years old and had a serious car accident on my way shopping. Firefighters told me afterward; they would have never expected any survivors in the wreck. I was driving too

fast, slipped off the rain-wet road and crashed the passenger side into a massive tree. I remained uninjured except for a broken nose and smaller abrasions. However, the manufacturer of my car was unrecognizable. But the even greater coincidence was, that my cousin had been supposed to sit in the passenger seat. Luckily, she dislocated her neck only a few minutes before I should have picked her up - by a simple and inconspicuous sneeze. As she was unable to move properly, she preferred to stay at home. By this coincidence, she survived the day without any incidents. My mother called it a miracle and mentioned guardian angels taking care of us. At that time, I thought she was talking nonsense – now, I believed her.

Through Haniel's eyes, I also noticed the countless unobtrusive things she had done to help. I had never paid attention to those little things, but they always seemed to be the life-changing events. In all possible situations, she took sticks and stones out of my way and let me look in the right direction at the right moment. While I was out partying, she let me drop my drink in hand, only to soak my next girlfriend's shoes in alcohol. That was the story of how we met.

Even when I decided to move to London and had no idea how to do that financially, she was on the spot. She put the idea into my head, to stroll through the city out of pure boredom. While promenading, I met an old pal I hadn't seen in years. He told me how he had recently won a bunch of money in the lottery. I became curious and some days later, I spent a few Euros and bought lottery tickets. One of them won me a nice four-digit amount I used to move. I had never noticed these connections before.

She also made sure Tom's assistant had the flu and the head had to play cashier, when I stood in front of his dinner for the first time. Otherwise, we probably would have never met.

In addition to all these loving things, I got a hold of something else. Something, I never would have guessed and probably no human was actually aware of. I watched the spectacle through angel's eyes. Countless heavenly warriors were constantly fighting against an even greater number of black figures. They came straight from hell and had only one goal: To poison the souls of mankind and recruit new soldiers for the underworld. Every single person was surrounded by countless shadows - always and everywhere. They didn't consist of matter, but rather a kind of black mist, invisible to mortal eyes. Armies of angels opposed these shadows. Every living creature on earth had at least one heavenly guard; masses had far more. They protected us with all their heart against the dark ones.

An epic picture unfolded in my brain, showing me at a festival with about 50.000 other visitors. For each and every one of them, dark creatures were roaming in the crowd. In all possible forms, they bustled around unnoticed between the people. The Angels were outnumbered but well-trained warriors with magical weapons, shining in all colors of the rainbow. This created a kind of battle; you don't even see in movies. Each angel supported the others and together, they worked like a perfectly oiled machine. Doing so, they easily fended off the masses of enemies. Rarely a person was touched by the figures and in exceptionally few cases, the angels let a dark one even get through to the humans. They immediately stuck to the ear of the individual and whispered into it. Some people simply seemed to need this, in order to grow and develop.

The dark figures could form as they wished and imitated the greatest fears of their prey. When someone was afraid of spiders, the shadow formed into one. Mortal eyes could not notice them, but in the subconscious, people felt something was close by. Only a slight touch of the shadows could implement all sorts of bad thoughts into the human brain. The endless numbers of dark demons seemed to be also connected to each other somehow. This way, they lead a psychological war, the world had not seen yet. They planted jealousy, envy, and greed in the minds of friends. They played the humans out against each other and allowed hatred to flourish. They incited people to doubt everything and everyone, convinced them to lie, to murder and to steal.

Only the most powerful creatures were capable of hurting a person physically. The rest was too weak to fully slip into our dimension, but even the strongest creatures could only do so for the blink of an eye. In our

world, these phenomena were known as poltergeists. They scared people by moving tables or showed up momentarily in dark corners. There were also incidents when people had suffered physical damage through hell's warriors. In extreme cases the demon threw a man through the room - using all his power and instantly disappearing into his own dimension, to restore energy. People getting killed by demons was extraordinary and never happened by direct contact, but rather demon caused malfunctions in machines or by bad thoughts planted into intoxicated brains. It didn't matter whether it was a young man on acid, thinking he could fly and jumped off the roof or the malfunction of a cable car, causing the death of several people at once. In our world, this was simply depreciated as an unfortunate accident.

However, the main goal of the dark figures was to acquire new dark souls. Every time a person did something bad, small black spots appeared on his soul. In its initial state, the spirit was whiter than snow. Only pure souls were allowed to access paradise. The others were sent to hell at the gates of heaven. There, they had the opportunity to torment themselves in purgatory and to wash themselves clean from their worldly sins. If they did not, they walked the earth. This way, the devil could take possession, drag them to hell and make them one of the black ones. The darker the soul, the easier for Satan to take. Then the lost souls were sent back to Earth to poison more of the good. Thus, an everlasting cycle of good and evil arose.

Whose soul became black, however, had nothing to do with the frequency of the touches or the strength of the demons. This was entirely due to the personality of the individual, as every soul outside of heaven had its free will. The demons only tried to influence this will and lead people to do bad deeds. The angels, on the other side, gave their best to prevent this. A man could thus be full of bad and evil thoughts, but still show all living things in his surroundings only his loving and good sides. Therefore, everyone was the blacksmith of his own happiness. By doing good deeds, a human could free his soul from the black spots during his lifetime and save himself the torments in hell.

Through Haniel's eyes, I could observe myself surrounded by demons. All my life I was attacked by these ugly black figures. I could not explain why, but this seemed to be far more often the case for me, than for other people. In either way, I found myself in situations, when the demons were an explanation for my decisions.

When I was in puberty, I found a purse with almost 1000 Euros cash. At that time, countless demons jumped at me and Haniel could not stop all of them. Numerous creatures touched me and I decided not to search for the owner, but to take the cash and get rid of the purse in the nearest pond. Then, I went and bought drugs. I didn't care what happened to the rightful owner of the money. In my current situation, however, I knew this was the savings of a young couple. They separated over the dispute about money. He lived a happy life, but she remained alone for the rest of hers. With my stupid decision, I had drawn circles, that reached much further than I ever deemed was possible.

Meanwhile, the pictures had gone quite far and I could observe myself digging the twin's graves. In the cemetery, an incredible amount of evil demons plunged on me, giving me the opportunity to better observe the angel's fighting technique. She dodged one demon at a time and lightly touched each one with her shining weapon. It appeared as if she knew exactly what would happen in the next moment, simply magical. Only a slight touch with the sword was enough, to make the demons disappear and send them back to their decision at the gates of heaven.

All this happened, while I worked on the children's graves, supported them and put the leftover earth away. In the meantime, the angel fought the countless shadow figures without problems, but there were always more to come. I would have never guessed anything like this was possible in a graveyard. I thought of cemeteries as a sacred place, but apparently, that was a lie.

Just when I was done with the burial places, something mighty showed up at the tomb. I had never seen such a figure in my life, yet I knew his name immediately: Azazel.

Haniel checked the demon out and his shape reminded me of the devil himself. His lower half with the hairy brown legs and the two large hooves gave the impression of a wild boar. He moved forward in a slightly stooped posture, but as soon as he was close enough, he stretched his body and came to a fair size. His upper body was humanly shaped and muscular, his face had human traits with the snout of a pig. Azazel wore long brown hair that hung wild and sparsely off him. Four tusks sprung from his snout, two on each side. They stood up steeply and were filthy like the rest of his body. His appearance gave definitely away where he came from. He was dressed in chains and torn leather scarves and had scars all over his body. A good twenty yards from Haniel, he stood still and folded his arms, holding his sword straight up in one hand, the other clenched to a fist. He waited and watched.

Haniel continued to fight the dark shadows while my alter ego was ready to leave work. It seemed like Azazel had disappeared and during the subway ride, the small demons reduced and the situation relaxed. On my way home from the subway station, there were hardly any black figures to be seen at all.

It was only a few steps before I arrived at my apartment, when the creatures started attacking again. After all, this was not a problem for Haniel - but suddenly and out of nowhere, Azazel stood behind me and assaulted me. He was one of the supreme demons and able to inflict great damage. He swung his tremendous sword and took out to a blowing slash. As always, Haniel was in time for the job and was able to repel him with her sword, doing a twisting motion. This all happened in the midst of some construction workers, tearing up the concrete in my street. In the eyes of one worker, you could see that a cold breeze had hit him. Otherwise, nobody noticed the struggle. As soon as he had been crossed, Azazel also disappeared and the last footsteps to my apartment were quiet again.

As I unlocked my front door, Azazel popped up right behind Haniel and attacked the angel. This was extra unusual, as the spawns of hell normally only focused on their prey. Until Haniel realized what was going on, Azazel had already rammed his sword into her side. When Haniel turned to her tormentor, Azazel used the fright second and slit the angel's throat with the next blow. The blue liquid splashed far and wide and for a glimpse, an intense light brightened up the surroundings. Haniel's sword slipped out of her palm, as she reached for her throat with both hands. Immediately, she went down on her knees and looked torn into Azazel's face, trying to understand what was happening. Just by itself, the shining sword hovered into an upright position. It paused for a moment, then vanished with incredible speed towards the sky. To me, this gave the impression of an emergency signal.

Without hesitation, Azazel grabbed the heavily injured angel and dragged her right through the wall into my bedroom. In there, he threw her face down on the floor, right where I had lost consciousness. Meanwhile, more and more of the shadow figures were present, setting themselves up in a circle around the events - cheering with disgusting sounds. The demon rammed his sword into the ground and stepped with both hooves onto Haniel's back. He stooped slightly and reached down to the wings. Then, he grabbed them just above the joints and with full power and a loud grunt, he started pulling. I could feel Haniel's pain. I could hear her bones cracking, then breaking and finally - with a goosebumps-giving sound - Azazel tore the wings off the angel. Within the blink of an eye, the tendons stretched and additionally ripped with a small bang. From now on, the angel was in a kind of delirium - I could feel it. She was conscious, but her perception tarnished and encased by silence. Without giving them heed, Azazel threw the wings onto my bed, while turning the angel with a kick onto her back. Then he knelt down beside Haniel and drew a deep black knife from his belt. I could see it through her eyes: At first, the demon smiled. Then, he cut deeper into the angel's throat with a precise blow.

It only took moments and Azazel had picked up Haniel from the ground and put her on his shoulder. This way, he pressed the angel onto my wall, as he pulled the nails out of a hidden pocket under his leather robe. He continued to support the body with his shoulder and drove the nails with his bare fist and highest precision through her shoulders into the wall. With every single stroke, Haniel's body shrugged and she briefly closed her eyes. Next, Azazel held her feet tight and then rammed the nails through the instep. In the end, only the arms were left. He placed one after the other and struck the nails through the wrists. Haniel remained calm and endured her pain.

It was only when the demon started to carve the symbols into her face, that the angel became restless. I could feel her fear. The demon held her drooping head with his left hand and carved with his right. Azazel started off with the cross on the forehead and then moved on to the cheeks. Haniel was torn apart internally from the pain, but unable to make any sound due to the throat-wound. Apparently, the symbols were draining the energy out of her body.

The further Azazel cut, the more his face got dipped in the angel's light. His black eyes were frightening and I could witness the deep abysses behind them. They had an emptiness in them; I had never seen anything this horrible.

At the exact moment when Azazel cut the last line into the right cheek, a fire red line appeared behind him, exactly at the height of his neck. In the same moment, Archangel Michael appeared in the room and grabbed Azazel's head from behind. Azazel's body fell to the ground, while Michael was holding his skull. The body dissolved into black mist within seconds and vanished. Michael used this time to present Azazel's head to the other dark figures, bustling around the event. They all started to run and fled immediately, as fast as they could.

That's all I could see. It was Haniel's last memory. Michael was the strongest fighter of the angels and practically nothing could defeat him.

This time, he was too late.

Chapter 3

As I was woken from daylight, shining through my bedroom windows - it had to be morning already. I knelt in front of the bed, while my upper body was laying on it. My glasses were in front of me, my eyes facing the head of the bed. I had my arms spread to a cross, similar to Haniel. I slowly opened my eyes, as they had to get used to the brightness first. I groaned, stretched and examined the room. My head was pounding, when I arose. The memory of last night was blurred and in addition, the throbbing in my skull handicapped my thinking. The last events I remembered, was Tom leaving and me, touching the angel. After that, I only had blurry snapshots in mind. "What happened?", I whispered to myself. I knew something incredible had hit, but I couldn't even think of it. I felt like the memory was hidden in the labyrinth of my brain and accessible, but: I couldn't find the right way. I knew this feeling from my childhood, when I fell off a climbing scaffold onto my head and my memory was wiped out for a few minutes. I knew I had climbed up the scaffolding. The next thing I could remember was me, laying on the cold ground and crying. My mother standing in front of me, with a panicking facial expression and tears in her eyes. The minutes in between were gone.

Only a few days later in the hospital, the memory gaps were filled. One of the old beams had broken and I had fallen from high altitude to the back of my head. My fall must have looked spectacular. "It'll be like last time; the memory will come back!", I soothed myself and pushed any concerns aside. The picture of my mother standing in front of me, however, had burned itself deep into my consciousness.

I blinked repeatedly and shook myself once more. Haniel had vanished from my wall and the room looked like always. Not even nail holes were visible. My eyes flew over the laying area and I crept with a faint yawn into my bed. The wings and the bluish puddle had also disappeared and not even feathers were left on the duvet. With a relieved groan, I let myself fall onto my pillow. My apartment was as usual and out of curiosity, I checked the time. It was 8:44 am and therefore much too early to get up on a free Saturday. I decided to stay in bed and go back to sleep again. At least, I tried. But I simply had too much confusion in my head and only rolled back and forth. "I'm probably just insane and the years of religious education have left traces. Now I use religion as a valve!", I argued with myself. That was a logical and perhaps scientific explanation. But: I didn't feel delirious, at all. My mind was as clear as it hadn't been in years. "Yet, if I'm not mad, this would mean angels do exist!" This sounded just as absurd: "Why should angels appear to me, at all? I am more opposed to religion than for it. This doesn't make any sense!", rumbled in my synapses. With similar thoughts, I occupied myself until I fell into a dreamless sleep.

I was woken up by a vibration next to my head. My cell phone on the pillow next to me was ringing and I sleep drunk checked the display. It was 11:11 am and my mother was calling. Immediately, I threw the phone to the bottom of the bed, nagged and turned around to sleep on. After a few seconds, the vibration stopped, but sleeping was no longer an option.

Begrudgingly I got up, showered and got dressed. "I'll call my mother later!", I thought, as I left the apartment to visit the Kyoto Garden in Holland Park. I often went there, when I wanted to rest and relax. Usually, I just sat down on one of the countless benches and watched the squirrels and peacocks roam around freely in the Asian-inspired park. I needed such oases from time to time, now and in all my previous professions. I had noticed early on; I could switch off and refuel my energy the best in the middle of trees and plants.

Meanwhile, I was sitting in the subway. With its metallic clacks, the train distracted me a bit from my confusing thoughts. I rode the route between Mornington Crescent and Tottenham Court Road frequently and

knew the soundscape of the track pretty well. Childishly, I imitated the groaning and crashing in my mind. While doing so, I had a flash of insight: "Maybe I should take a few days' leave!"

The Kyoto Garden was forty minutes away and I had to change the tube once. While doing so, I walked past a digital clock - it was now 1:11 pm. From then, Haniel was stuck on my mind and I occupied myself with the one, to me fundamental question, again: "Are angels for real?" This thought followed me, like my shadow. "This would mean heaven and hell existed and there was a God? Was I not insane, but all others blind? Are these ideas already called mad?" While I was finishing this thought, I overheard a father talking to his daughter: "The numbers are important, use them to create a wonderful painting!" The little blonde girl, sitting two places next to me, dealt with a painting by numbers and I looked at her, puzzled.

It didn't have anything to do with me, but regardless, I felt like I had to hear this sentence. As if I was exactly in the right place at the right time. Unfortunately, I didn't know what I could get the ball rolling with, so I ignored the situation and checked, how many stations I had left to travel. Luckily, the train just arrived at the next stop.

As I glanced through the window, one loud word shot off my mouth: "Fuuuck!" This attracted the attention of the father, sitting next to me. He glared at me with accusing eyes, supposedly just wanting to protect his daughter from my outburst. I didn't care anyway - I was in the wrong train. In my head, I continued cursing: "Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! I didn't want to come here - it's a fuckin' Saturday, everything is flooded with tourists. Fuck!" At Tottenham Court Road station I had taken the subway going east instead of west and ended up at Bank. I was pissed, especially because I had never made this mistake before. I probably hadn't been fully conscious, when I was changing trains. As if I was fleeing, I got off the train and paused on the platform. "What do I do now?", I reflected. "I don't want to spend at least another half hour going in the other direction, fuck!" As the easiest solution, I reluctantly went with the flow to the exit, paid my journey by card and started searching for a park, where I could soothe my soul.

I was hardly out of the station when sunlight hit my skin and caused a smile on my lips. Immediately, my discontent was blown away. Full of desire I ran off, without knowing where to go at all. Not even the endless number of tourists and the full passageways could knock down my spirit. I simply strolled in direction of the Tower Bridge, as I knew about two or three smaller parks nearby. Maybe I was lucky and could get a hold of a free space solely to myself. As I didn't know this part of London very well, I pulled my phone out and checked my position using GPS. In the meantime, I had reached Monument Station and spotted a green mark on the digital map, that appeared to be near. I instantly decided to visit the area.

After a few minutes, I turned off the crowded street and went down a narrow path, that should lead me to my destination. With each step further from the main road, the atmosphere got quieter and there were hardly other people present. A little further down the narrow lane, I walked past an old church tower, dwarfed by the surrounding skyscrapers. "So where should this park be?", I muttered to myself, while I turned around and checked my surroundings. Suddenly, I tore my eyes open and marveled: "Wow, that's unexpected!"

This was not a usual park, but an old church with a missing roof. It probably was destroyed a long time ago. Of the nave of the church, only the walls were intact. On these walls, there were large creepers and twiners growing, slowly edging their way upwards as they started to bloom. The mix of green leaves and white buds appeared almost dreamlike. In addition, there were huge, old trees standing on the grounds. Even the altar room, where the believers used to sit on their wooden benches, was now covered with trees. "Is this a coincidence or what is going on?", popped into my head. "Yesterday angels, today churches - what is going on?", I thought to myself, as I walked through the heavy iron gate into the park - allowing my gaze to wander, as I

paused for a second in front of the church gate. The tower gave an impression of being old, but, as it still rose above the naval, a well-kept one, too. I could recognize the countless green spaces and the paved paths in and around the building from outside already. This place was wonderful and yet; there was hardly a soul present - perfect for my intentions.

I sauntered through the highly elaborate stone gate into the building. With a little imagination, you could recognize the splendor of the olden days. The building had been finished with much love and I really liked the omnipresent smooth arches and the rounded corners. The temperature inside the church was somewhat cooler than outside and somebody had positioned benches in a semi-circle, inviting guests to linger. A mix of scents of blooming flowers and climbers, as well as a light note of incense, crept into my nostrils. I enjoyed myself and rested on a park bench. Right away, I lit myself a cigarette and opened a can of soft drink, I had bought on the way. As I wanted to chill, I let myself slip from my seat, so I could find a position as comfortable as possible. Almost laying down, I let the old masonry work its magic on me.

The architecture of the building, in particular, the shape of the windows, reminded me of the Cologne cathedral – nevertheless, this church had lost much of its grace over the years. The light walls were, alongside the creepers, dirty with moss and had green spots all over them. There were also some branches from outside the church hanging in the aisle. Exactly in the spot where the priest's altar used to be, a tree was growing. The sun shone through the numberless leaves and created a wonderful synergy of light and shade on the walls and the ground of the dilapidated chapel. The panes of glass windows had probably fallen from their frames a long time ago and the creepers were taking advantage, growing through the opening and up the outside walls, too. This created a real charm for the old walls. A charm, I had never encountered before in any cathedral or church, ever.

Although I was central in the City of London and not far from the main tourist attractions, the inside of the church was rather quiet. You could hardly hear the traffic, dashing only a matter of yards away through the metropolis. For several minutes I enjoyed this peace, as it was far too rare in this hectic city. Only for a few minutes, I didn't want to think but unwind. Therefore, I ignored the people around me and closed my eyes. I consciously began to focus on my breathing, having learned to do so on a rainy Sunday afternoon, online. I inhaled slowly through my nose and exhaled through my mouth. While breathing in, I focused on getting as much air as possible into my lungs. Other than this, I concentrated intensely on the inside walls of my nostrils, especially about them getting colder with each breath. When I exhaled, I tried to press all the air back out. With this breathing technique, I could easily lock myself away from the outside world. I had used it in numerous situations over the years. To me, it was the perfect opportunity to take a look inside and sort my thoughts out.

After just a few minutes, I was completely calm and ready to focus on my deepest self. Out of nowhere, a first solution shot into my mind: "Should I go to a psychologist or a priest?" Immediately, I reconsidered: "A psychologist would give me some drugs to calm me down but wouldn't change a thing about my situation." Promptly, I had made a decision and the psychologist was ruled out. I didn't want to end up like some of the patients I had seen in the hospital. Plenty of them appeared as more of an empty shell than anything else. To me, the drugs reduced people to their most important functions, thus neglecting their human side. Of course, some patients' treatment was good and probably the right thing to do. However, I often thought that all, some of these people needed, was to hear the correct words to connect some missing links in their brains - curing them before you know it. Which words a specific patient required was not known by anyone. In any case, the human spirit seemed far too complex to be tamed, restrained or altered by chemicals. But that was only my opinion.

Then I thought about my other option: "Should I go to a priest and tell him about my experiences?" I gulped and gasped heavily, then continued: "Which priest in this huge city would take some time and listen? Would

he be interested in my story at all? What if everything really was my imagination?" I was kind of afraid of the answers, I might get. "Should I trust my friends or family first of all? Would my parents believe me?" I did not know.

To be on the safe side, I had only one option left - to turn to a priest. I knew they had the duty to remain silent and the visit would not cost me a cent. But before actually getting anything started, I planned to inform myself and browse the internet or visit a library in London. Maybe this would help. Maybe I would find something supportive in one of those books. These thoughts encouraged me and a smile formed on my lips. I kept my eyes closed and sucked the flower scent into my lungs. At least I knew my next step now.

Like the touch of a ghostly hand, I suddenly felt a light rub on my underarm; I had put on the armrest next to me. Slowly, I opened my eyes. A small ladybug was sitting on my arm and checking me out. My smile transformed into a wide grin and in my mind, I greeted the small creature: "Hello!" I had this word hardly formed in my brain, yet another ladybug landed on my left hand, I had casually resting on my thigh. After a few seconds, the next one flew into sight and settled on the printed sun on my T-shirt. I checked my surroundings bewildered - this had never happened to me before. Of course, I had a ladybug sit on me, once - but three within a few glimpses? "That's not a coincidence!" I whispered.

At this exact moment, something dropped onto my head and frightened me for a split second, causing the insect to raise from my shirt and fly away. The soft thing continued to tumble from my head over my shoulder and chest, all the way down to my crotch, where it stopped. Now I could set my gaze on a green caterpillar with small black dots. The little animal had probably fallen from a tree. It landed on its ridge and moved rhythmically back and forth to turn itself around. Carefully and slowly, gently enough for the bug to keep sitting on my arm, I pushed my right hand towards the caterpillar and stretched my finger out, so the creature could support itself and get on its feet. Immediately, the insect crawled onto my fingertip and along the back of my hand, but stopped on the bracelet on my wrist.

I had bought this brown leather trinket at a festival, years ago. It was of good quality and still in a wonderful condition. The thin band ran through an oval silver block with an engraved symbol. On the other side, a cheap push button was used to secure the ornament. The symbol consisted of two semicircles, each open side facing outwards, both connected by a thin line, starting in the middle of the circles. This resulted in a simple, symmetrical symbol I had worn on my wrist for many years.

Momentarily the merchant came to my mind. I could remember him perfectly. He was a nice, middle-aged man with obvious southern European roots. You could clearly detect them from his dark, tanned skin, his black hair and his accent. Whenever I got remotely close to his stand on festival grounds, he would start talking to me. He tried to entice me to his shop the entire weekend, but was not pushy. Rather a funny guy with a huge repertoire of daft sayings. I kept joking around with him the whole festival. On the last day and after a few beers too many, I let him persuade me and went along with him. He showed me his oodles of chains and bracelets, while telling me about his life. Regardless, I intuitively dashed to a large cardboard box labeled "remnants". He kept this box somewhat hidden at the back of his stall on the floor. With the first dunk of my hand I pulled the leather bracelet out and asked: "How much is this one?" He smiled at me and replied: "I've had this bracelet for years, sitting in this box and nobody ever wanted to buy it. You know what, I think it is about time it got a new owner. You can have it for free, just take it!" I had not been counting on this much generosity and my jaw dropped. I stuttered several times "Thank you!", toward the salesman. After a short break, I spend spinning the bracelet around on my index finger, I started talking again: "But I would like to give you something, I just don't know what." He answered with a sentence; I never will forget: "That is really simple: If you

ever have the chance to do something good for someone, do it! However, I want you to not expect anything back, the same way I am not expecting anything from you. Then, and only then, we are even!" Once again, my chin dropped. I was speechless. It took several seconds until I was able to at least stutter again: "I will, promise!"

Then I stored the bracelet away in my pocket, said goodbye and headed back to the stage. Only when I was a few steps away, something else came to my mind. I turned around and shouted in the direction of the salesman: "Hey! What does this symbol mean?" He smiled and shouted back: "Freedom, my friend. Best of luck!" Saying this, he put his right arm onto his heart. "Thank you!", formed on my lips without making any sound and I quickly continued to walk to the bands. I didn't want him to notice, how big the knot in my throat had become.

The caterpillar was sitting exactly on this symbol, staring at me. I didn't know how to approach the situation and the idea: "This cannot be a coincidence!", came to my mind, again. The beetle on my right hand had already flown away, but the last one was still sitting on me. I lifted my arm to breast height and contemplated the caterpillar closely. It had small hairs all over its body and I questioned myself, what it would look like as a butterfly.

Hazily in the background, I noticed a girl in a blue, knee-length dress. She had long, black hair freely dangling over her shoulders. I lowered my arm and focused my eyes on her. The girl was still a couple of steps away, but I already knew, she was heading for me. The child was about seven or eight years old and you could already see it crystal clear - she would blossom into a beautiful woman. Two steps in front of me, she stopped and a shiver ran down my spine. Regardless, it wasn't an unsettling feeling, more of a relaxing one. The girl offered her right hand and started to talk with a childish, but firm voice "Hi, I'm Mary. We've met before, but you probably don't remember." As she said this words, all three ladybugs landed in her open hand. I was flummoxed and rechecked my surroundings, if anyone else had noticed what was happening. Unfortunately, nobody was observing us. "Where should I know you from?", I replied decisively in German. She started to smile and looked me even deeper in the eyes, then answered in English: "You will remember, sooner or later!" Saying this, she clenched her hand with the insects into a fist. The shiver got stronger immediately and a tremor ran through my body. Her brown eyes really did seem familiar, but I had no idea where from. "*Not in this life!*", came to my mind like an inspiration and made me shudder. "What does that mean?", I replied in my spirit, but was pulled from my thoughts by Mary: "Just believe, promise!" she said in an affectionate tone. "I will do my best.", I replied, not knowing what that meant and without thinking for even a second. Saying this, a tear ran from my right eye, appearing to come out of nowhere. At this moment, Mary opened her hand again, showing me her bare palm. The insects had disappeared. I pushed myself to the back of the bench and kept my eyes constantly on Mary. As I didn't know how I should behave, I cleared the tear from my face and breathed deeply. With a questioning, but softly tone I replied: "What are you?" - "You will find out, soon!", I got as reply, while the girl turned around. "See you - very soon. I am already pleased!" I heard in accent-free German. Before I could reply anything, she had hopped and jumped her way to disappear behind a church wall.

I stayed on my bench as if I was paralyzed - clueless. After a few moments of stiffness and only observing the wall, Mary had disappeared behind - I got up. As if remote controlled, I went a few paces further to a tree, where I put the caterpillar on a low-hanging branch and gazed at the bench once more. I was mystified. "What was that? Who was that? Had I met the girl before? What did she do to the bugs? They are just insects; they can't actually obey a person, can they?" I had so many questions, yet not a single answer. The past day had been intense and severe, but to my surprise, I was still keeping calm.

I had already noticed, that since my move to London, I had become a more balanced person. Nevertheless, I could hardly believe it myself – I had remained calm in the last 24 hours. For a moment, I thought back to the days when I was living in Germany. My reaction would have been to get wasted on drugs, only to stifle my thoughts. In the meantime, this was not as easy anymore. I didn't manage to get a hold of drugs as, for some reason, nobody wanted to sell me anything and my previously loved pills and medicines were only available on prescription. This meant, I had to stay sober all the time. I had never wasted a thought about this, but eventually, this was a good thing. Without hesitation, my mood brightened and with each breath, I fell deeper into euphoria. I suddenly felt as if everything was exactly as it should be, as if all the decisions I had made throughout my life were now starting to slowly come together at one point. This was enough to give me an upswing and I started to smile.

After I felt like I was done, I got up from my bench and started my way to a fast food shop nearby. I hadn't eaten all day and was hungry. On my way out, I walked past several benches. On one of them sat a pensioner, I had already seen when I entered the park. Shortly before I passed him, I heard him say: "Are you okay, my dear?" I moved my head to the right and stared in his face. He was probably older than I would have guessed, had his grey hair hidden under a beret and was wearing sunglasses and a dark suit with black shoes. His precious walking stick was resting on the bench. "He looks like a true English gentleman!", I thought to myself as he repeated his words: "Are you okay?" I gulped and nodded: "I'm fine, thanks for asking!" I answered while I stopped. "The young girl in the blue dress just gave me goosebumps, did you see her?", I added. "What girl do you mean?", he replied. "I have been sitting here for hours and I haven't seen any young girls. Are you sure, you are okay?", he went on and scrupulous continued: "You look like you've seen a ghost!" The blood froze in my veins and my voice stuttered: "Are... are you sure? I was talking to her right over there!", while I pointed my arm to my bench. "Sweetie, I have been watching the whole park and I didn't see any girl. Also, this place isn't really meant for children, I think. Are you sure you are okay?" The thoughts in my head started to circulate. "Was the girl just a vision? Have I gone mad? What the hell does this old man even want from me?" Somehow this gentleman gave, in spite of his appearance, an unsympathetic impression away. For some reason, I did not want to talk to him, but I couldn't pinpoint why. While I was still thinking, another shiver ran down my spine and I suddenly replied in a gruff tone - as if my answer were the bullet of a gun: "I am sure she was over there, maybe you need new glasses or you should get out of the sun!" For a moment I managed to even shock myself - to speak to someone like this was not my style, at all. Mostly because the old man was just trying to be nice. He was now staring bemused at me, so I chose to end the conversation quickly: "I'm sorry, I have to go. Bye!" While saying these words, I turned towards the exit and got going. I didn't care what the old man thought of me. Without looking back, I left the park and walked to the underground station. I'd find something tasty on the way.

I went past numerous restaurants and fast-food outlets, but none of them was appealing enough to get me into the shop. Meanwhile, I had a sinking feeling in my stomach. In spite of my hunger, none of the countless stores really did it for me, and when I saw a tempting one, it was already overcrowded. Before I knew it, I was back at Bank station. Without hesitation I went in and decided to visit Tom at the Camden Market and to get something to eat there. So, I waited patiently on the platform for the next train to the High Street.

In Camden, I stumbled out of the station and inhaled the fresh air deeply. On the square next to the station, one of London's countless street performers was presenting his show. What he was exactly doing was hard to decipher, as there were too many people surrounding him. Usually, you came across acrobats, magicians and musicians in this spot. In any case, the shows were usually good and worth watching. As my stomach was

grumbling and I did not know what the fuzz was all about, even when standing on tiptoes, I reverted to my original plan and turned to the right.

I battled my way through the crowded pavements until I reached the small bridge over Regent's Canal. To get some sun, I leaned on the thick external wall and stretched my face towards the light source. After a few seconds, I let my gaze wander over the people and like every time I visited this place, my eyes fell on the black and white sign above the market's entrance, showing the powerful motto in large letters: "Come in, we're very open-minded." In the course of this, the "very" and the "minded" were hidden in small font between the words next to them. I liked the idea a lot and started to smile. Then, I walked beneath the sign into the market and made my way to Tom's snack stand, hidden towards the back. I loved to wander around the market and the motto didn't promise too much. The area was filled with all types of music, the smells changed almost as often as the tunes and you could overhear languages from all over the world. Every few steps, you would stumble across something new.

Still a few yards from Tom's stand away, I could already see him, not necessarily doing great. The night before was clearly holding him back. With a cool: "Hey man, how're you doing?", I greeted Tom and leaned myself on the wooden board in front of the register, next to the only customer. Tom looked at me with blank eyes. Bad genes did not cause the bags beneath them and his whole face appeared to be somewhat sunken. In spite of all, he answered with a smile on his lips: "I've had better days, never having car-bombs again!" Saying this, he started to grin mischievously, leaned forward and whispered "Between you and me - in this little space, there's kind of a blood alcohol parade, you know." Saying this, he nodded in secret towards his chef. I set my gaze past Tom and contemplated Matthew, giving a crazy expression today. Instead of grilling while standing as usual, he had gotten himself a barstool; he was now sitting on while turning the sausages, looking done. With a grin on his face and while placing a sausage in a bread roll, Tom asked: "What've you been up to today?" - "I was in an old church!", I replied instantly. "'Oh, stop dealing with those, they just want your money and hardly do anything good with it. They should actually be the ones offering help, don't you think? The problem is all man-made. Unfortunately, many people have the mentality of crabs in a bucket. Too bad.'" My jaw dropped. We had never spoken about this topic and I didn't know what I could answer or what he wanted to tell me. While speaking, Tom handed his customer a wad of serviettes with the bread and sausage wrapped in. This made my stomach grumble and I remembered why I actually stopped by in the first place. "Do you have any bratwurst left?" I inquired, while unconsciously rubbing my stomach. He pointed at the young man, now standing a few steps to the side, biting into his snack. "Unfortunately, he got the last one; we are out of bratwurst for today. I can offer you other sausages and fries instead, what do you think?" - "No thanks!", I replied with a tinge of disappointment in my voice. "I don't know what I want myself. Do you have any suggestions?" Tom reflected briefly while fiddling with a set of laying around tongs. "Ah, a few days ago they opened a new one, offering schnitzel! How about that?" - "Schnitzel, really? I haven't had that in ages, where is this stand?", I cheered back. Tom explained the way and within seconds, I had said my goodbyes. I had gotten very hungry in the meantime and definitely needed something to chew. In my mind, I pushed Tom's speech aside - I didn't want to think about it now, but at some point, I would. My priority was to calm my hunger down. Consequently, I made my way through the narrow lanes, until I stood before a green wooden hut. Luckily, there was no one else waiting in line and I could order my food right away.

After a few minutes, my burger, chips and a can of soft drink were served in a small cardboard carton. Instantly I started to check my surroundings for a suitable place to eat. I wandered around the market and after only a few steps, I found a wooden barrel I could use. I placed the carton on my table and slouched down next to it. Without hesitation, I started to stuff the hamburger into my mouth, while watching hordes of people making their way through the crowded aisles. A lot of them appeared to be stressed; I could perceive the rush

in their eyes. Others just strolled and gazed at the countless sellers' displays. I simply enjoyed watching people, but only a few of them actually looked happy. In my opinion, such people are obvious from a distance - they beam in a special and unique way.

As I had finished my food, I crammed the trash into a ball and started walking to a rubbish bin. The next one I knew, was just around the corner. I headed over and dropped the litter. As I turned around to walk home, my view focused on a large, white sign several yards away. All of a sudden, I was speechless, my eyes wide open and I caught my breath as if my heart had missed a beat. During my countless visits, I had never noticed this sign, even though it was easily visible at good height. I had probably walked past it numerous times. In large black letters, one sentence was written: "The devil is and always will be a gentleman!" The old man in the park popped into my head and I shivered. "Did I meet the devil?" shot through my body and mind. Gentleman was a word I never used. Now, these weird connections established in my brain: "I'm slowly starting to not believe in coincidences. So many of them in one day... is that a coincidence?"

Chapter 4

As soon as I had reached my apartment, I went to the kitchen to grab a soda from the fridge. Parenthetically, I cleared the, still on the working top laying, knife and the butcher's hammer away. Immediately, the dead angel was on my mind again. Absently I turned around and leaned against the kitchen line, while my gaze wandered over the floor and I contemplated the events once more. Only now, an important question popped into my consciousness: "Who the hell kills an angel?" But even before I had finished my thought, I noticed the irony and uttered a sigh: I was probably answering the question myself. Simultaneously I straightened my gaze at the microwave. The device was slanted in front of me, tucked in under a hanging cupboard. As if there had been a power outage, the display didn't show the time but blinked: "11:11". This worked for me, as if someone was giving me something to understand and tried to additionally amplify the message by blinking. "What does this mean?", I whispered, but was clueless. Out of sheer curiosity, I dashed into the living room and checked my DVD player. Reliable as always, he showed the correct time: "6:33 o'clock". This meant, there was no black-out. At least that was for sure.

Least impressed I wiggled my shoulders, got my drink from the kitchen and sat down on the couch. Promptly, I conjured my laptop up from under the living room table and after only a few seconds; the portable computer was ready for operation. In an instant, I started to browse the internet. First, I wanted to learn about Haniel and typed her name into the search engine. With only a small click on my keyboard, I got countless results. Curious I opened the first and read a few lines. While doing so, I pulled my head backward and tore my eyes open. With fright, I stopped and muttered: "This cannot be!" While my mouth formed these words, my head began to throb and I felt the pain in my forehead area, again.

All I got to read on the unprofessional looking page fitted to my experiences perfectly. Haniel was the guardian angel of the Ibex. I was born in January and thus one of them. After a few seconds of contemplating, it struck me like a brainstorm: I was born on the eleventh of January. I shuddered and whispered to myself: "What... What does that mean - the ones again?" I did not know what to do and couldn't figure it out either. All I could do was to ignore the coincidence and read on. Further down the internet told me about Haniel being assigned to the color blue. "That fits the liquid!", hammered in my skull. As soon as I read further, I repeatedly stammered in a surprising tone: "That can't be! That fits! Why does that fit?" In the next paragraph, I was struck by the fact, that Haniel should have an impact on the third eye chakra. I had heard this term before, but had also no idea what it meant. Only after searching the web I figured, that the chakras are different points in the body and according to ancient teachings, they form the center of the energy of a human being. It sounded kind of crazy, but I guess that didn't mean anything in my situation anymore. The third eye chakra was, as the name already said, centered above the eyes behind the forehead and I suspected it to be the reason for my headache. As I was working on in the text, I also learned about the chakra's extrasensory perception. "Is this the reason I could see Haniel?", I thought and asked myself: "Is it perhaps not all nonsense?" But still, I couldn't believe it. This would put everything in my life into question and, above all, upside down. So, I resisted and searched for conclusive explanations. But I could deliberate as much as I wanted - I couldn't find any.

While I was deeply trapped in my thought process, the motto of the Camden Market struck me like an inspiration: "Come in, we're very open-minded!" I faltered and my mind suddenly revolved around something very different: "Did I have to see this sign again today? Does something or someone want to tell me, to open my mind? How is that supposed to work?" Within a few moments, possible connections were visible before my inner eye, I had not noticed before: "Were all the appealing shops in the vicinity of the bank station crowded, so I would definitely go to the market? Was the pause on the bridge necessary, to face the motto of the market? Maybe - until my arrival - the last sausage had to be sold so I would eat schnitzel? Should I be led to the second

sign?" My brain ran at full speed and the feeling in my forehead got stronger. Again, a flash of sudden inspiration occurred in my head: "Am I perhaps just opening my mind – right now?"

I started to fidget and to rock my foot. I was restless and could not sit still. So, I got up with excitement and paced through my apartment. To rub my eyes, I threw my glasses on the couch, while contemplating: "What is happening? What is this? I don't want that!", I murmured to myself with a faltering voice. My breathing was erratic and my heart filled with pure chaos. I had somehow lost faith in me. I had always been sure; I was the ruler of my life. At this moment, I did not feel that way, but rather like everything was predestined. This was at least the only explanation for the countless events. "Is anything in my life random at all?", I stammered. My neck tightened and frantically, I inhaled and exhaled a couple of times. I didn't want to think about this topic anymore; it was too much to handle at once. Instead, I needed a few minutes to turn off and cool down.

To distract myself I pulled my phone from my pocket and opened social media. Distant I scrolled through my news feed, still walking back and forth in my flat. Alternately, I leaned on the couch or ran into the kitchen, just to sit down on the work surface. But somehow, I just couldn't calm myself and my route started from the beginning. Immersed in thoughts, I checked what my online friends were doing - the usual crap, framed with a few interesting posts. I was almost putting the phone back in my pocket when my eyes suddenly caught my ex-girlfriend's new profile picture.

I had not heard from her in ages, not to mention talking to her. She had embellished herself, but that was not important right now. She was on vacation in Spain, at least that's what her GPS tracking told me. In the picture, you could see her in front of a huge wall with some graffiti. I always liked this style and concentrated on the colorful mural painting next to my ex. I needed some time to identify some of the strongly curved and nested letters, but as soon as I had deciphered the sentence, it hit me like a slap in the face. It gave me a thought-out approach, perfectly suited for me and at perfect timing.

I wanted to hug the artist for his scrawling and I was simply grateful to my ex - only for showing me this picture. I was, in any case, sure; both would never know how this small deed had helped me. One sentence was written on the wall, with colorful letters, double-breasted: "It's easier to live in the past than to head to an unknown future!" This sentence matched perfectly - so well, it made me shiver and a tear escaped my right eye. My breath calmed and I felt like, all my worries, doubts and anxieties were washed out of my body by this single tear. This had to be the happiest drop of water anyone could ever experience. After all, the situation was reminiscent of the afternoon, as if I was in the right place at the right time. As if everything in the world had come together, to make this moment possible. Simply wonderful.

I exhaled heavily, cleared the tear from my face and softly questioned myself: "Am I worried about the future? Do I live in the past?" As I couldn't find any easy answer, I decided to deal with it another time. In any case, I felt calmer and thus sat down at my PC, again. Nevertheless, I needed to take a few deep breaths, before I could finally go on.

The next sentence I read about Haniel made my body tingle and gave me a big set of goosebumps, right away. In the realm of angels, she was responsible for integrating consciousness into the everyday lives of people. As soon as I had read the paragraph, I reflexively slammed my laptop shut and stared into the void for several minutes. The fan of my computer running at full speed was the only sound breaking the silence. I started to slightly rock back and forth and tore my eyes open. "If all of this is true, Haniel definitely did a great job!", occurred to me, but in return, a sad thought popped in my mind and while exhaling pensively, I mumbled: "What price did she pay? Is a piece of my conscience really worth the death of an angel? That doesn't make any sense at all. Why me?", I repeated again and again in my head: "Why me? Why me? Why does this happen to me? Why did she sacrifice herself, for me? Maybe I should have been the one hanging on the wall?"

Finding answers was impossible. I had never been religious and was therefore sure; angels wouldn't be interested in someone like me. I never liked church. My whole life, I never wanted to be part of it. I was just born into it. There was nothing, I could do about it. The calmness, I had reached a few minutes ago, had disappeared and I started to twitch my foot again. Innumerable thoughts were pinging in my head "Isn't even my birth a coincidence? Nothing? Is everything just like it should be? Had I needed something to hit me hard so I would wake up?"

I could have partially understood if I was a high figure in church or at least someone the church actually meant something to. "I am just a normal person!", I determined. Saying so, I pulled myself off the couch and started walking through the living room anew, with my thought process hanging onto me like a shadow: "What is special about me? I am indeed like everyone else and my life is ordinary, too! What could it be?" In any case, the more time I spend contemplating, the more frustrated I got. I simply couldn't think about anything about me being different when compared to other people. I was at my wits' end and my ongoing reflections made it worse. My problem was, I simply couldn't stop thinking - who wouldn't love, being special?

I speculated about a way to distract myself and to cool down. The first thing that came to my mind was drawing. When I was younger, working with a pen was my valve to reduce anxiety and to shield myself from the world. Meanwhile, years had passed since I had held a drawing pencil in hand and I was convinced, the outcome would look awful. Regardless, I started to dig through my cupboard in the living room and shortly, I found a pad of paper and a pencil. With tools in hand, I sat down at the coffee table and without wasting a second thinking about what to draw, I started to act on the blank sheet. First by drafting a few lines, massaging my soul in the process. After a few minutes already, I felt calmer and contemplated my work. It was a crazy page of tangled lines; I could describe as abstract at best. Disappointed, I blew the air out of my lungs. "I used to be so much better!", I mumbled in frustration.

With my bad result, the drawing was somewhat different to the source of calm I was looking for. So, I started to concentrate on my breath once more and respired in and out calmly. Just like at the old church, I focused on the walls of my nostrils. After some time had passed, I closed my eyes intuitively and picked up the pencil without hesitation. Eyes closed, I started a new drawing and simply pushed my pencil over the sheet of paper for a few minutes.

After I naturally felt the painting was finished, I opened my eyes and was simply amazed. My drawing was far from perfect, but pretty good for the requirements and I got a bit proud of myself. With some lines and a few shadows - I had created an angel with short hair. He was wearing a floor-length garment with sleeves. I had drawn crooked and not perfectly positioned wings, but they gave the impression of a moving character. This couldn't be Haniel, as this was clearly a male representative of the species. Just as I had greeted the first ladybug in the afternoon, rhetorically I murmured in my mind: "Hi, who are you?", to the drawing in front of me. The corners of my mouth slowly moved upwards, and a smile formed on my lips. Out of nowhere, I heard a strong voice in my head: "*They call me - Uriel!*"

A little anxious, I pushed myself against the backrest of the sofa, while reflexively taking my gaze from the drawing and checking the room. Exactly above my couch table, directly at eye level, a small red dot had appeared and hovered in front of me, within reach. Essentially, when I caught sight, I was anything but frightened. From one moment to the other, I actually felt as joyous as never before. This copper coin-sized point radiated endless love into me. Next to this, if by a ghostly hand, a scent spread in my apartment. I smelled cinnamon, but that wasn't the only scent, there was a second one, too. It reminded me of some liquor I used to drink in the past, back in Germany. I pushed this thought aside; it simply wasn't important for now. I felt so comfortable. Like all my fears had been extinguished and all doubts had been blown away. As if my body was flooded with the best feeling there is. I never wanted to sense anything else, ever again.

As if after years of traveling – years, I had always longed for coming home - I finally unlocked the front door. I didn't want to turn my eyes away from this light and did not bother blinking either. Overcome with this wonderful feeling, I gazed motionless at the point and enjoyed the silence. As if time had stopped for a moment, to let me take full advantage of it, at least for a short while. "What's happening to me?", my inner voice whispered. I got only one word in reply: "*Soon!*" Even if this information was as short as it could be, it was sufficient for me.

Suddenly I heard something crack next to me and out of reaction; I turned my head to the right for a split-second. I couldn't notice anything special, but as I moved my eyes forward again, the angel had disappeared. But now, the DVD player in my direct field of view no longer showed the correct time. It was not as late as "11:11", yet.

The feelings Uriel had triggered in me still lasted and I leaned back completely relaxed. On the one hand, I was happy and glad about the visit of the angel, even if I had never reckoned with this form. On the other hand, I found it a shame it was already over. But he had given me a piece of peace and somehow triggered me to do everything possible, to get to Haniel's secret. I wanted to know what had happened. Most important to me, was "Why?" I absolutely wanted to know what was going on in the invisible world, no matter the cost. Never in my life, I was as motivated as at this time and I felt as if I could uproot trees all day long.

Now, I was not afraid of being crazy anymore. I knew what I had seen and felt, although nobody would believe me. I would remain calm and solve this mystery in secret. Only when I knew what was going on, I would go public and change everything - everything. The motivation thrust was enough to make me feel proud I had seen Haniel. I was the one; she had appeared to and no one else. I realized, there had to be something special about me, that was certain. I would figure out what it was. I would get my answers; I just had to be patient and play along.

My eyes noticed the numbers on my DVD player, once more. The fact I saw the ones again made me smile, even though they were the same as before. I decided to inform myself about the meaning of the digits and to devote my time to Uriel afterward. So, I opened my laptop again and waited till he was ready for operation. Meanwhile, I checked the room and drew the last bits of the scent into my nose. Like a brainwave, it occurred to me: "Sambuca!" The liquor I had meant. After I looked it up online, I knew what I had smelled next to the cinnamon: anise.

As soon as I had this knowledge gap closed, I devoted myself to the important ones. As I did not even know what to look for, I simply followed my first idea and started to read into numerology. I had seen a documentary a few months ago on the Internet, but couldn't remember much, unfortunately. I dealt with the subject for some time, but somehow it was not the answer, I was looking for. I learned about destiny- and life numbers and their mystical involvement in human beings, but this was not satisfactory and definitely not what I was looking for. Something was missing. I kept trying my luck and after a while, I found an online forum, where people with resembling situations were talking about numbers. Among the countless contributions, people were claiming to be highly sensitive. This term was new to me and I had to look it up and read in first.

In my opinion, they were high-minded people. Not from a scientific point of view, but a different one. Some of them were great with their sensory, others with their emotional perception. Some would identify more details in their environment and process them in a peculiar way; others were able to feel the emotions of their fellow men. These human exceptions could kind of absorb the emotions of other living beings and interpret them uniquely and specially. This seemed to be a wonderful gift to me, but according to the articles, it was a burden to most of those people.

I also noticed some parallels fitting perfectly to my life - and I got fascinated even more, especially when I read the story about highly sensitive people having a more intense perception of music and art. It went on

about their higher level of enthusiasm and the big desire for independence these people had. In the end, it was about the intuitive way of thinking, such people used. When I had read the section, I was astounded. Someone had expressed it in words. Someone had written down, how I exactly felt all my life. I was speechless - someone had given the damn thing a name. I always thought I just felt like this, because I was just me.

To contemplate, I let my body sink deeper into the couch. I had noticed in countless situations, I was a little different from others, but I had never esteemed this as anything good or bad. To me, everyone was just as he was and everyone was good. The whole thing was all about how you treat other creatures, at least to me. If people were nice to me, to my fellow humans and animals - I was a nice guy. If they were not - I could be the biggest disgust they could imagine.

I remembered a situation on open street back in Germany. I was walking with a friend to a pedestrian zone, just to stroll around. We had to walk steeply uphill, while a young mother coming down towards us caught my eye. She held on to her children's carriage with one hand and had her phone in the other. I noted how tight she had to hold the stroller, so it would not slide out of her hand. When the woman had reached our height, I also noticed her high-heeled shoes and thought casually to myself: "How the fuck can you walk on the freakin' cobblestone?" As soon as she had taken her first step past us, I turned around and shook my head while gazing at her.

As if I had known, as soon as she took her next step, her heel broke and she buckled. In this fright second, she dropped her phone and let go of the baby cart, too. It immediately got moving and accelerated slowly but steadily towards the crossroad, running along the foot of the mountain. Thank god, I had observed the situation and set a spurt without hesitation. After a few quick steps, I was able to catch up and stop the pram. When I brought it back to the mother, I greeted her in a friendly tone, while she was standing in front of me, balancing on the whole shoe: "There you go, You're welcome!" In response, I did not even receive a thank you. Instead, she only complained about the cracked display of her mobile phone; as it had shattered into a thousand pieces. Meanwhile, the baby in the carriage had begun to give joyous babbling. I pondered for a moment, smiled at the woman and positioned the stroller perpendicular to the mountain. Then I calmly asked: "Do you even know who I am?" She looked at me with big, questioning eyes and answered: "No, where from?" I began to grin, walked towards my companion and told the mother to her face: "Let's leave it like that!" While I said this sentence, I kicked vigorously against her other heel. It broke instantly from its attachment and the young female fell on the paving stones right in front of me. With an over-friendly voice, I added: "Have a good day, you're welcome!", and immediately started walking back to my friend. She looked at me with disbelieving eyes and asked: "You did not really just do that?" I smiled at her: "Yeah, she needed that!"

I had never thought about this incident ever again, but now I wondered: "Had I done something good or bad back then? To save the baby was, of course, a good thing, but everything that came afterward was questionable. Had I put the woman in place or had I humbled her? Was my response justified or exaggerated? Did I help her to become a better person or had my actions made it worse? I would never know.

With the reflection of the incident, a smile appeared on my face and I leaned forward to my laptop, again. I read further and further and somewhere between the numerous contributions, I found a user, talking about angel numbers - a kind of communication between beings from another dimension and human beings.

As soon as I had typed it into the search bar and pressed the Enter key, a ladybug flew out of nowhere past my ear and crash-landed onto my keyboard. He slithered for an instant and stopped exactly on the seven. Then he squirmed briefly, straightened himself up and checked me out. Although I was perplexed, I thought about Mary's words and decided to keep my promise. For a few seconds, I examined the bug quietly and counted the dots on his back - exactly eleven. I felt glad; he had come by to visit. When I was a kid, these animals were

regarded as a blessing - at least my grandmother had always told me so. I stretched a finger out to the little animal and gave it some time to crawl onto my hand. Then I placed him carefully next to my laptop and went on with my research. He remained seated quietly and started to clean his wings after some time. Meanwhile, I had found a lengthy text about the message of the four ones. Countless people called it a kind of activation code, transferred from a different dimension to be noticed by humans. The Code should help people get aware of what they were - deep inside. "It all makes sense and fits!" I contemplated as a sudden temper flashed through my body. "Did I come across an open secret?", I whispered to myself. My breathing got faster and faster, but I knew, this happened out of sheer pleasure. On the inside I felt loads of hilarity, I wanted to cry out into the world.

I was delighted and could not believe my own eyes. I felt like I could see the world naked. "From this day, I do not believe in coincidences anymore!", I decided decisively. With this idea, the beetle rose next to me, as if I had just given him his start signal. Promptly, a grin hit my face. "No, coincidences really do not exist!"

I briefly checked the time on my mobile phone - 23:23 o'clock, almost midnight. Although I did not really want to, I had to go to bed shortly, as I had a hard and unpleasant day ahead of me. Although I only had to be at work for a few hours, I was horrified. However, this was not going to change after all - the sisters wanted to be buried and ultimately, someone had to do it.

Chapter 5

I was woken up from a night of tangled dreams by the loud ringing of my alarm clock. Like every day, I napped a couple of minutes and hit the snooze button several times. After a while, I got up, went to the bathroom and put my clothes on, then made myself coffee. Since I had opened my eyes I had a throbbing in my forehead but decided to not use my otherwise beloved painkillers, as I was sure, the pain didn't mean anything bad. Instead, I sat quietly on the countertop of my kitchen, comfortably sipping from the hot drink in my cup. With thick black font, one word had been printed on the pottery: "Smile!" I had gotten it as a present from my parents when I moved out and had never really noticed the nice gesture – now, the cup pushed a smile onto my face. While I was drinking coffee, I was wearing my headphones and listened to music. Over and over my eyes checked the continuous blinking of the microwave: "11:11". In the meantime, the numbers helped me smile and I felt glad for being too lazy to correct the clock. After I finished my coffee, I got myself ready and left home towards the subway station.

Pretty much like every other day, I followed the black markings of the Northern Line and got in a train heading north. Within minutes, I was already at my last stop and made my way to the surface. "I can easily walk, till the bus even arrives!" I mumbled to myself while checking the timetables of public transportation on the phone.

The walk took only 15 minutes and I was a perfectly in time, so there was no need to hurry. While I strolled along the empty sidewalks, I remembered the missed call from my mother: "I have to call my mum back, fuck!" Immediately, I put my headphones down and searched for the number of my parents in my contacts. Only a few key pushes were needed and my phone was dialing and rang already. I listened to the sound repeating a couple of times, but no one picked up. So, I put my headphones back on and continued the music. No one answering the phone surprised me. After all, it was Sunday noon and my parents were almost always at home. But, I didn't want to put too much thought into it and just kept on walking. Part way, I came to realize - the closer I got to the cemetery, the slower I was actually walking. Being a gravedigger was certainly never my dream job, but today I really did not want to be at work. Days like these were, by far, the worst part of my position.

Funerals always went down the same way. I prepared everything needed for the burial upfront and kept myself hidden, until the coffin was lowered down. At this stage of the ceremony I had to operate the small mobile crane to put the dead down to their final rest. Only when the burial was done and all the mourners had left the cemetery, I would fill the graves with soil. Beforehand, I always collected the thrown flowers from the coffin to display them afterward. In the end, I usually planted some flowers in the fresh soil, collected my tools and my workday was done. Actually, there was nothing special about it and I had no big problems doing my job, at least every other day. This time, however, felt different.

As soon as I reached my workplace, I changed clothes and went to check the graves. Hardly any excess dirt had fallen down, so I did not need to do much additional work. "You have maintained them well!", I praised myself. Next, I picked up the wooden cross from the cemetery storage and checked the flower shelf. Surprisingly I found it empty but didn't give it much thought, either. I just walked to the graves and put the cross centered behind the resting places. Only in the next few months, I would be able to put up the gravestone, when the soil around the fresh graves would be well compacted. I climbed down the tombs - one by one - and shoveled the bits of down-dropped soil upwards. While working, I thought about the siblings. I wanted to know what had exactly happened to the twins, although this was quite hard to find out for me. Like a flash of lightning, a possible solution came to my mind: "I can talk to the priest afterward! Maybe I can

hit two birds with one stone and get some insight! Perhaps he will be my contact!" I figured, this would be a great plan.

After I had finished the graves, I went back to the break room. Still, I had at least half an hour till the arriving of first mourners. Back in the break room, I checked my phone first and tried to reach my parents once more, but no one answered. Just as I wanted to call my mother's mobile number, my boss entered the small lounge. Even before greeting me, he asked if everything was settled for the funeral and I replied shortly: "Yes!". Out of sheer curiosity, I inquired: "How did the two children die?" He looked somewhat thoughtful at me and answered: "I don't know, haven't read anything in the paper. All I know is the city council has paid for the funeral." I glanced at him with wide eyes. "Why?", I muttered. "Sorry pal, that's all I know!" He looked noticeably annoyed and started to dig through his locker. Meanwhile, I leaned back in my chair and painted scenarios for the girls in my mind. "How can twins die by coincidence on the same day?" I pondered with down casted eyes. "Maybe the girls were sick!", dawned on me. During my reflection, I got my sandwich from my locker, unpacked it and took a big bite. "Both dying the same day due to some illness is highly unlikely.", I kept thinking. "How can siblings lose their life on the same day?" In this moment, I noticed how cynical my thoughts were, but this seemed to be an occupational disease. My colleagues and my boss, who was still digging in his locker, often showed these awry manners. "Maybe it was a violent crime?", I questioned myself and an evil thought came to my mind: "What if the father murdered both?" I was shocked and pushed the conclusion quickly aside. I didn't want to think about anything like that. Abruptly and out of nowhere, a sparkling idea arose in my mind: "It must have been a car accident, everything else makes no sense!" For a moment, I felt like a detective and was sure; I had solved the case.

As if stung by a tarantula, my boss suddenly cheered and shouted: "Fuckin' found you!" while he raised his wallet. "I thought I lost that fuckin' thing! The only reason I came here today!", he told me with a mischievous grin. "Have a nice day, I got to run!", he barked in my direction and even before I had swallowed my mouthful, he was out the door already. As a farewell, I gave him a hand signal, while nodding my head, even though he did not even look at me. I did not care, I was rather glad he had left and I had peace again. I devoured the rest of my sandwich with pleasure and put my headphones back on.

After a few minutes of singing along to the music in my head, I caught sight of the priest through the small window. He and four men were marching into the cemetery. They were grouped in two – each faction carrying one small coffin. I was acquainted with two of the guys. A well-known burial company employed them and I had worked with them from time to time in the past, but: I had never seen anyone of them as a pallbearer. Usually, they tended to take care of organizational work. As I also had never seen the priest before, the whole thing seemed odd to me. From a distance, he appeared young and seemed to be limping with his right leg.

Slowly, the group made their way to the resting place and I wondered, where the remaining mourners would be. Mourning communities at a child's funeral were either huge or familial and small, there was no in between.

I got up from my chair and positioned myself in the door frame of the brick house. The group had already walked more than half the way and I glanced at the entrance, repeatedly. Minute after minute passed by, but no one entered the graveyard. "What is going on here?", I mumbled full of curiosity to myself, while I crept further towards the graves. "Perhaps the family members are at the other entrance?", I puzzled. "But, there is no better parking either, what's going on?" It was only when I approached the twins' final resting place closer and peeked around a giant bush, I discovered what was really going on.

Abandoned, the priest stood in front of the coffins, waving with his hands and presumably rattling off his usual program. I caught my breath and walked a few steps closer. The sound of the gravel beneath my shoes

awoke the priest's attention and he waved me over - in the middle of his sermon. I followed his hand gesture and stepped right up to him. While waiting for me, he paused his speech – and I already found him unpleasant.

When I was close enough, I immediately uttered: "Why is nobody here?" He shrugged his shoulders and his answer ran coldly down my spine: "They were orphans." My throat tightened immediately and I reflected. Only after a few moments, I replied: "So what? What about the other children from the orphanage, or the housemasters, anybody? ", I uttered with a somewhat trembling and confused voice. "I don't know why nobody showed up!", the priest remarked. "What about the four pallbearers? Where are they?", I kept the conversation going. "There is a football match in an hour and they had tickets, that's why they left. I was lucky enough to find someone to carry the coffins!" My chin fell down. This was something, I had never encountered. "Alright... let me get this... nobody actually cares about their death?" I promulgated with a stagnant voice. "It seems so, yes." The priest answered in an indifferent voice. My body started to tremble as I realized - I was getting angry. It seemed to me, as if the priest did not care at all about the fate of the children, about them being all alone in this world. But still, I held myself back and asked in an as gentle as possible voice: "Do you know how they died?" – "Yes!" he replied without any twist in his expression. "One of them fell into a lake near the orphanage while playing and the other one probably tried to rescue her sister. At least that's what the police told me. They were found later in the evening, both drowned."

I had experienced a lot in terms of death in recent years. This, however, was new. I shuddered and had to gulp a few times. Rarely I had felt so close to tears in my job. I grieved the two and did not know what to do. On the one hand, I was angry at the world and on the other, I felt incredibly sad about the destiny of the girls. In my helplessness, I asked the priest: "What do we do now?" He observed me with his brown eyes, snorted and responded: "I'm not doing anything! My job here is almost done. We can't do anything for them anymore anyway. It's probably better both are dead!" This answer made my blood run cold and a world collapsed on me. Immediately I thought to myself: "How can a priest be so cold-hearted?" With every second I became angrier and my face petrified. Inwardly I was fighting myself, but after a few moments of pulling myself together, I swallowed my unspoken thoughts and ordered myself to remain calm - although I would have favored to spit in his face.

I tried to play it cool and in- and exhaled several times. Then I positioned myself in front of the graves, as the only mourner, wearing my filthy and partly holey clothes. I quietly listened to the priest's speech and briefly waited for my intervention. Once the time had come to let the coffins down, I got the crane and wrapped a rope around the first crate. There was a small emblem with the name of the deceased screwed to it, so, I suspended Sarah's coffin first. Within a few minutes, it had already disappeared underground. Without hesitation, I climbed after the casket and released the rope. Conventionally, many eyes would now gaze at me - today, however, the only one gazing was the priest. I had rarely felt so bad. Something was missing at this funeral. Probably the compassion and the tears - as they were commonly part of death. Usually, there were people crying and sobbing. Today, the atmosphere was so unbearably quiet - a weird feeling. As I got back up from the grave, I noticed my trembling and the lump in my throat getting thicker. I felt simply unbearable sorry for the girls. Nevertheless, I tried to be as professional as possible and wrapped the rope around Alison's coffin. I had gotten some practice over time and within seconds, I was able to hook the crate to the crane. As I was just as fast as with the first one, the second twin was lowered to her final rest within minutes, too. One last time I climbed down and repeated the process. In those minutes, I no longer felt like a human being. I was much more of a robot, just doing what had to be done. I hated myself for that.

Then I silently put the small crane aside and listened to the priest's last sentences. I could feel it - he did not want to be here and I noticed he was starting to speak faster. Just as I was walking slower to work, he was

getting faster with his speech. He seemed like he was in a hurry - probably just wanting to watch the football game, too.

Bouncing up and down on my heels, I stood across from the priest at the foot end, while I focused my eyes on him and tried to assess him better. Since the sentence "The two were probably better off dead!", I just couldn't stand him and nothing he could say would change a thing. That was certain.

As I examined the clergyman, the rage within me rose with every blink. Therein I concluded to myself: "I will not say anything about my experiences to any of you fuckers. Particularly you - you are the worst!" Considering how angry I was, I would have gladly beat the shit out of this man of God.

After the priest had pronounced his last Amen, he put his attention to me and uttered: "Your turn now, have a nice day. I have to get going!" With furious eyes, I observed him. "Is he serious? Is he really vanishing?", but before I could even end this sentence in my mind, he was already about to leave the place. Only when he was a few steps away, he turned around, checked the two holes in the ground and announced with sad eyes: "You know, burying children is never easy, burying twins is even harder, but do you know what gives me the creeps about those two?" I glanced questioningly at him, as he kept talking: "It's as creepy as it is beautiful. When the girls were found, they were still holding hands." Shocked, I focused him and contemplated: "What does he mean?" At the same moment, the priest kept on talking: "I want to leave now, I need to be alone!", and without waiting for my answer, he turned and started to walk to the exit. I remained stunned, contemplating.

Was this guy not the asshole I had held him for? Did he finish quickly, just for the sake of it? I exhaled briefly and my rage was gone. Completely lost in thoughts, I started to fill the tombs. First, I went and grabbed a shovel, then uncovered the heap of dirt sitting aside. At a slow pace, I shoveled the earth downwards. Alternating left and right I threw a shovelful into the graves. With each shovel flip I delivered, I heard the sound of the earth falling onto the hollow coffin. It raised my hackles and I speculated about the girls. "Who were they? What happened to their parents and why were they orphaned?" The further I reflected their fate, the more I got horrified. Only one thing was clear to me: The twins did not have a pleasant life. This was the first time since I started working at the cemetery, when I hated the surrounding silence. I was alone with my thoughts and nothing could distract me from them. Even if I had not left my headphones in the break room, somehow, this time, I did not want to listen to music. I wanted to think - maybe - I even had to think. In recent days two angels had appeared to me and yet, I doubted. I questioned the meaning of life - maybe death was a better way out for some. And I thought about why an omnipotent being wanted two small children to live such an awful life and then end it so abruptly. Once again, nothing made sense.

Meanwhile, I had shoveled enough soil into the tombs to cover the coffin's surface and, as the two cheap-looking crates could not be seen anymore, the disturbing, hackle-raising sound had finally disappeared, too. After a few more minutes, both graves were covered up to the ground level.

I sat down centrally positioned in front of the tomb and observed my work. Additionally, I lit, even though forbidden, a cigarette and leaned back. I was sweaty; the sun was burning on my head and only the lightly blowing breeze refreshed me. After I inhaled the cigarette smoke, I realized, I had no flowers or wreaths to decorate the graves. Since no one was around to leave something and the town was obviously unwilling to pay for them.

While dragging on my cigarette, I wondered what I could do. I set my gaze up to the sky and thought: "What the heck? Do you hear me? What is this shit about?" Then, I waited a few minutes for an answer from above. To pass the time and calm myself a bit more, I lit another cigarette. Once again, my eyes looked up and I said quietly to the clouds above me, while holding up the cigarette with three fingers: "That's how much time you've got! I want to know what the fuss is all about!" I fought with myself on the inside, while whiffing

the cigarette. Slowly but steadily the cigar burnt away. As the ash got closer to the filter, I squeezed the tipping off beside me. Then, I got up and gazed into the sky: "You know what? Fuck you; I don't need your help."

I directed my eyes to the tomb and observed the brown soil. All of a sudden, I made a decision: "Fuck it, fuck this, I fucking quit. I'm going back to Germany!" I nodded my head slightly and continued to stare at the graves. "First, I will take proper care of you. They shall do to me, whatever the fuck they want - I don't care anymore. I am done!" As soon as I had finished this phrase, I grabbed my shovel and hurried to the nearby graves. Then, I dug one of the countless flowers out and planted it into the twins resting place. Immediately I ran off to the next grave and repeated the whole thing. I started digging out flowers of numerous graves and fixed them in the twins' one. As if I had really gone mad, I repeated this process, until the resting spots were almost completely planted with flowers. Then I remembered the two beautiful roses I had seen in the storage room. They were meant for someone else, but I couldn't care less. Immediately, I ran off, picked them up and planted them. One for each sister. Sarah got a red and Alison a white rose, placed exactly, where I expected their hearts to be. Only now I was satisfied with my work and had thereby created the two most colorful graves throughout the whole cemetery. The missing flowers on the other graves could hardly be noticed; nobody would ever know.

I sat down in front of the twins' resting place and gazed at the wooden cross, again. I felt content with my actions and noticed a smile forming on my lips. Instinctively, I put another cigarette on and contemplated further for a while. I had no idea what the girls looked like, but still, I had great sympathy for them. While I observed the tombs, I noticed something on the wooden cross. For some reason, I had not paid attention to the last name of the twins. Now, I got goosebumps all over my body and a cold shiver ran down my spine: They were called Doe.

Out of a sudden, this reminded me of my few weeks working in the English hospital. They gave the surname Doe to unknown people, in most cases unconscious drunks - only till they became responsive again and could be properly addressed. Not rarely, the involved persons were mentally confused individuals, picked up by the police somewhere. A male patient would always be named John Doe, a female Jane. I beat my hand on my mouth and concluded: "Weren't even their parents known?" I shivered and kept wondering: "Couldn't they find any other relatives? Where there any relatives at all? Was this just a coincidence or were the twins really abandoned in this world?" Only thinking about this literally made me shudder, but out of nowhere my new motto from the day before came to my mind. I said it quietly to myself: "I no longer believe in coincidences!"

While wondering, I leaned my body backward and let my arms carry my weight. Then I turned my gaze toward the sky and uttered quietly: "What the fuck?" As if by the push of a button, my forehead started pounding at an extreme pace and I could not move anymore. As if an invisible hand was holding me down, I sat on the ground like paralyzed.

Suddenly I heard children's laughter and two voices started talking like a duet in my head: "*Do not be angry, everything is, as it shall be.*" – "Sarah? Alison?" I replied in thoughts. "*Not anymore.*", I got in response. "What is the way it should be?" I asked again. "*You don't see it yet, but soon, you will!*" they responded. "I... I do not understand!", I stammered back. "*Everything comes exactly when you need it - remember that!*", then the voices added something else: "*Seldom has anyone taken care of us the way you did. Thank you!*" After this sentence, the throbbing in my forehead disappeared in an instant and I could move again.

Still shaky, I remained seated for a few more minutes and starred at the graves. My body trembled, as I was absorbed in thoughts. I had no idea what I had done so great after all, as I was only doing my job. But seemingly, I had fulfilled my part and I started to smile. Now it was my time to head home. I collected my

tools, cleaned my hands and changed into casual clothes. After only 30 minutes I was already on my way to my apartment.

A big smile magically appeared on my face as I left the cemetery. I would not walk this route as often anymore. The decision I had made was firm - I would move back to Germany. While listening to loud music, I cheerfully walked back to the station. Luckily the next train heading south arrived at the platform when I set my first step on it. I even got a hold of a free seat in the otherwise crowded train and at the next stop, the person sitting next to me left. This way I had enough space to make myself comfortable. Oddly enough, nobody wanted to sit next to me, but I did not mind. Actually, I was kind of glad.

Out of boredom, I observed my surroundings and my attention gravitated towards a seemingly drunk man, standing only a few steps from me. Even though he held tight to a loop, his staggering was easy to notice. But my eyes could only gaze on his back and I wasn't able to recognize his face. After checking the time on my phone, I thought to myself with a tiny smile: "Respect dude, it's now 5:55 pm and you're already high as midnight!" Exactly after this sentence, the man turned in my direction and I was astonished.

This was the priest from the funeral. He looked straight into my eyes. I forced a smile on my lips and thought: "Please, do not come over! Please, do not come over!" But he had already spotted the free seat next to me and was on his way. I was compelled to take my headphones off, as he was already sitting next to me and fired up a conversation: "Did you take good care of those two?" A decent smell of booze blew into my face and I waved the air as good as possible to the side. "Yes, I did all I could - the graves are really beautiful!" - "I am glad to hear that. Thank you!", for an instant, he smiled and then continued: "I went to a pub. Sorry I couldn't stay any longer. This funeral was the hardest one ever!" I stared into his face and had no idea how to answer, but I did not need to - the alcohol seemed to push the words out: "You know, a long time ago I had a sister. Her name was Alice, too." His face expression twisted as if he was trying to suppress his feelings. "We were involved in a car accident, back when we were kids. My foot broke so many times; I still cannot walk properly." He paused for a moment, and I noticed his struggles to maintain his composure. Only after a couple of moments - meanwhile I had put my arm on his shoulder - he went on: "She was dead in an instant, right next to me." I felt a shiver going down my spine. The priest continued: "It was impossible to not notice your dissatisfaction, but I could not stay any longer. All this reminded me too much of my sibling!" He averted his gaze from me and stared at the floor between his feet. I had to pretty much read lips, as he murmured quietly and barely audible: "It seems like I'm still not over it. Otherwise, I would have given a better sermon today!" He then paused for a moment, turned his head and said in a trembling voice: "Believe me when I tell you this - if I could trade with my sister, I would. I definitely would!"

"I am sorry!", I whispered and suddenly, I felt horrible about misjudging the priest. I inhaled and exhaled a few times, considering what I could say. Since I could not think of any suitable words, a sudden idea came to my mind. I shut my eyes for a moment and in my spirit, I asked for help: "Uriel, please guide me!"

After only a few seconds, I felt like someone inserted words into my head and without thinking, I started talking: "You know what, I am sure your sister is an angel now, watching over you. Let her rest and find your own peace. Let me tell you, I am sure - no..., I know - the twins are angels, too. And I'm sure they are playing with your sister in heaven, right now!"

With his brown eyes, he looked at me and I could feel it - he was close to tears. He needed a while, till he had regained his self-control but, I could see something dawning on him: "You are kind of right, but I simply miss her, especially today!"

Without even thinking for a moment, I answered: "It is perfectly fine to miss someone, but you must not allow your grief to take your will to live. Everything is as it should be. Do you think your sister would want

you to be sad?" With big eyes, the priest gazed at me and briefly processed my speech. Then he answered with a smile: "You do a better job than I!" I grinned back and noticed, we had just arrived at my last stop. So, I got off my seat, put my hand on his shoulder again and looked deep into his eyes. "Well, I just know things. Have a nice day! Goodbye!" He stared at me in disbelief and stammered a "Bye Bye" back. I turned around and stepped off the train. Until it left the station, I could feel his eyes gaze upon me. I left the subway with a marvelous feeling in my stomach.

As soon as I was at home and barely laying on the sofa, my phone rang. My mother was on the line, shouting into my ear: "Kid, I got news!" - "First of all, hello mum, what's going on?" Something was upsetting her and I had no idea what it could be. She spluttered without giving me a break: "Do you remember when I told you about your cousin being pregnant a few weeks ago?" - "Yes Mum, I do. Is the gender already determined?" I asked to casually show at least a little interest. At the moment I was too messed up to talk to her properly. But my mother did not care at all and continued: "You are starting this wrong! Do you remember your cousin always wanted to have several children?" - "Yes Mum, she has been telling this to everybody, since she was 16 or so, why?", I asked calmly and carried on: "Don't make this so exciting, what is going on?" My mother replied: "Okay, your cousin went to the doctor last week. It's a boy!" - "Good for her, mum, but why do you feel so thrilled?", I tried to distract her. "The doctor has seen something else during the ultrasound! I'm sending you a picture!" - "Mum, I am talking with my cell phone, I can't look at the picture right now! What is it?" I answered kind of concerned, adding another "Is everything okay?" - "Kid, everything runs like a clockwork!" - "Woaah Mum, what is it?" I had expected a lot, but not this kind of answer: "The doctor told her he must have missed something. It is not just a boy, but two. In other words: She is having twins! The first twins ever in our family!" For a brief moment I was speechless. Then I tried to end the conversation as quick as possible: "Really, good for her! But listen, mom, my doorbell just rang. I have to hang up for now. I'll call you later!", and I hang up without waiting for an answer. In an instant, I opened the picture on my phone and observed it.

At first glance at the black-white-grey ultrasound image, it looked like the boys were holding hands. An immediate smile came to my face and I thought of Sarah and Allison. Apparently, everything really was, as it should be.

Chapter 6

I spend an hour listening to music and only then called my mother back - I simply didn't want her to notice I had lied to her face. We were on the phone for a while and I decided to take a few days off during the call. I wanted to think about the idea of going back to Germany, again. Spontaneously I wrote a short message to my boss, asking if I could stay at home for three days. Meanwhile, the throbbing in my forehead was back, but I took this as a good sign. Within minutes my boss replied he was fine with my short vacation. Finally, I could sleep in again. After I had surfed the internet for the rest of the evening and read about a few spiritual themes as well as the names and duties of some angels, I went to bed past midnight.

At first, I was dreaming of today's funeral and my cousin restlessly. I even felt my body tossing and turning in bed while sleeping. Then I started to dream about the vicar and Haniel. But, I could only see images hissing past me. On the pictures I could identify dark demons, circling around me and I recognized myself at a festival, I had visited a long time ago. Besides, I was able to watch myself in the cemetery, digging the twin's graves. I took it as the usual jumble of dreams and nothing relatable.

Then, from one moment to the other, the world around me was drawn to a green point on the horizon and I suddenly floated in a black sea of nothing. Only the infinitely far away point dived the action into a greenish light. I felt like I was in a kind of tunnel and shouted for help a few times, but only got silence as an answer. Some time passed in my dream and nothing happened. Notwithstanding I swam around in the darkness.

Suddenly I heard a voice echoing, breaking the silence: "*Give him some!*" I immediately woke up and checked the clock next to me - the green numbers showed 3:33 am. So, it was still in the middle of the night. "What is that supposed to mean again?" I whispered to myself. But, as I was still half asleep, I didn't want to think. So, I dropped my head back on the pillow and tried to go to sleep again. While I rolled in bed, I set my gaze on the alarm clock on my nightstand. Just as the display jumped to 3:34, my alarm went off magically and frightened me for a split second. The radio blasted in full volume: "Bongiorno! Raphael is new in town! Try Raphael's Pizza!" Annoyed I bent sideward to hit the power button to have peace of mind again. For a second, I was cursing, as I needed a moment, but then - I remembered.

I hadn't read about Raphael until the evening. He was one of the archangels in the Bible, assigned to the color green and the task of healing people and helping them to become one again - whatever that meant. I couldn't remember a lot but enough for the moment. I rubbed my eyes and thought: "Had archangel Raphael just contacted me? What did he want to tell me?" Since I simply wanted to go back to sleep, I just grabbed my phone from the nightstand and quickly started the camera. Within a moment I took a picture of my alarm clock - just to make sure I had not forgotten the matter in the morning. Once this was done, I put myself back and fell asleep in an instant.

When I woke up, even before opening my eyes, I noticed I was humming a melody. The earwig was on the tip of my tongue, but I couldn't distinguish the song, no matter how hard I tried. This melody accompanied me all morning and I constantly repeated the specific section in my head. While I was in the shower, when I brushed my teeth and even while having breakfast, it simply wouldn't leave my mind. Since I wanted to spend my free day in the sun, I decided to go to Kyoto garden. This time I would concentrate better on the change and not drive in the wrong direction, again.

It was early in the afternoon when I left the house and once more, I was on my way to the subway, while still whistling the melody. There was little going on on the streets and I arrived at the subway station within

minutes. As always, I used my card at the gate and went further down towards the platform. I took the escalator down to the tracks and the closer I got; the louder I could hear the music of the street musician. He always stood in the same place and I needed a second, but then I recognized my melody.

I imitated the musician's guitar in my head, but the name of the song just wouldn't come to mind. When I arrived downstairs, I went straight to the guitarist and asked: "Hi, hello! What's this song called?" As if I had just inquired an incredibly stupid question, he stared at me with big eyes. "That's Stairway to Heaven, my favorite song ever!", he replied. I had to smile about the irony; therefore, I simply said "Thanks!" But instantly the words of Raphael came to my mind. So, I pulled my wallet out of my pants and checked for coins - I had exactly eleven cents in my wallet. The musician gazed upon me as if he was expecting money - while I was checking my bills. "I've only got 20-pound notes, that's too much. Fuck!", I thought while I blew the air out of my lungs. For a moment I was deliberating and then I decided: "Fuck it, he should have it!" With that in mind, I threw the bill in the musician's guitar case and went on.

After I had taken a few steps, my forehead started to throb again and something pushed a sentence into my synapses: "*Stay, just for a short while!*" Stunned, I turned around and the street musician faced my eyes directly. I could even see a sparkle in his eyes - a sparkle, I had never observed in any other person before. Those were not the eyes he had when I asked him about the song. Again, something pounded in my head: "*You're ready. See you later!*" When I received this sentence, I could see the musician shaking and checking his surroundings. This gave the impression as if he did not know what was going on, either. The sparkle in his eyes had disappeared, but still, he smiled at me and continued to play, undeterred. I just walked further towards the tracks and waited for my train to Holland Park.

Before I knew it, I was already at Tottenham Court Road and changed to the Central line. Like a tourist, I meticulously checked the way on my cell to finally reach Holland Park. Within a few minutes I had switched over and after another ten, I could get off at the station. I went directly to the small shop next door and bought two cold cans of Cola and a pack of walnuts. Why I bought two cans, I did not know - It occurred to me and I just did. Right after I got out of the store, I went to the left and followed the road. Then I tormented my smoker's lungs up the mountain to the park. The sun burned unruly from the sky and I was already sweaty when I arrived at the top.

As soon as I stood in front of the entrance, I briefly admired the brick gate and then walked through it. Without detours, I steered directly to Kyoto garden. The way lead along a dirt road, narrowed by a wooden and partially musty fence. You could observe countless squirrels here. They were accustomed to people and could be fed easily. I opened the pack of nuts and put a few on the edge of the wayside. As soon as I had placed the nuts, the first squirrel was already at the little heap and quickly raced back to his tree, carrying his food. I smiled while watching the spectacle.

A little further along the road, the park blossomed in all colors of the rainbow and the fragrance of countless plants was in the air. I inhaled deeply, stretched my head to height and paused for a moment. To me, nature meant pure relaxation and a thought came to my mind: "In Germany, I could be in nature on a daily basis, I wouldn't live in such a huge city!", but actually, I didn't want to contemplate about my future - I just wanted to relax and watch animals.

After a few more minutes of walking, I opened the wooden gate to Kyoto garden. Unfortunately, all benches were occupied and I had no place to kick back.

Nevertheless, I strolled around the pond and observed a peacock pecking something a further in the meadow. In my opinion, they were majestic creatures. As soon as a squirrel was nearby, I grabbed a nut from my bag and displayed it to the animal on my palm. Every single one rushed to me immediately, grabbed his

food and disappeared into the green again. After I finished my route around the lake, I left the Kyoto Garden and checked for a free seat nearby.

Since I could not find one solely to myself, I took the first opportunity and sat down next to a homeless person. He was wearing a long grey beard and his face was somewhat swollen. He was dressed in cut-off trousers and a filthy T-shirt full of holes. In front of him on the ground were three plastic bags - crammed with clothes, a sleeping bag and all his other stuff. Pretty much everybody else avoided the vacant seat beside him, but I didn't care - as long as he was nice, so was I.

I was still carrying the cans in a plastic bag and as soon as I sat down, I pulled one of them out and opened it. I noticed the homeless man staring greedily at my drink, especially when I lifted it to my mouth and took a big first sip. As a matter of course, I pulled the second can out of my bag and offered it with a hand movement to the vagrant. He just nodded and I handed him the beverage. In this movement, a butterfly flew by and sat down on my bracelet. I was not too surprised and thought: "Does this have a deeper meaning? Has the caterpillar now become a butterfly?" The creature was as white as snow with small black dots at the top of his wings. He was beautiful to look at and closed his wings while sitting on my bracelet. I looked over at the homeless man. He had no eyes for me but checked out the beverage can.

Without hesitation, the tramp opened the drink and took a big sip. Since we didn't even greet each other, I started a conversation: "Hey, what's your name?" Still, with the can on his mouth, he looked into my eyes and pulled his mouth angles upwards. I was startled. In his eyes, I could see the same sparkle as the musician had. My forehead began to throb and words were pushed into my brain out of nowhere: *"Mankind calls me Gabriel."* Surprised I slipped away from him and said quietly: "The one I suspect?" and again he answered in my head: *"The Archangel, indeed!"* Instantly I could smell the scent of lilies and hear water splashing in my head. I had read about Gabriel. He was the prophet among the angels and was assigned to the color white. Again, I felt incredibly happy and my lips formed to a big smile. I was not afraid or awe, I just rejoiced him sitting next to me. The homeless person stared at me and after a few seconds, I started to talk: "What gives me the honor?" - *"You passed all tests with bravura. You shall be privy, as countless before and endless after you."* He shared all this with me, without even opening his mouth. He communicated on another level.

In my head, I thought to myself: "He knows what happened to Haniel!" Immediately I got the answer: *"Have patience! First, you shall learn. Learn how the world works."* I waited anxiously for what would come. *"The world is a mirror of your deeds, your words, your thoughts!"* - "What does that mean?" I asked in my head. *"Only when you smile in a mirror, someone smiles back. Do you understand?"* I felt as if gentle connections in my brain, that had not been there before, were made and I replied: "I believe so!" - *"Good, too many people do not notice the mirror, thou shalt do otherwise!"*, the angel in human form spoke further. *"Follow your intuition. Do you understand?"* My head began to rumble, but somehow, I enjoyed this feeling. Again, I replied: "I believe so!" - *"Good, too many people follow bad role models; thou shalt do otherwise!"* I nodded as an answer and contemplated: "What is the meaning of this?" In an instant, I got the answer: *"Notice the ants over there. Do you think they would survive if just a few didn't work for their society?"* I set my gaze across the gravel path and discerned a small nest of insects. "No, presumably not!" - *"Good, too many people only care about themselves; thou shalt do otherwise!"*, again I nodded in agreement. *"Are you afraid of death?"* - "No, not anymore. The twins showed me it's not the end!" - *"Good, umpteen people don't live free, only for their fear to die. Thou shalt do otherwise!"* Again, I nodded slightly with my head.

"If you consider this, you'll be fine. Do you have any other questions?" - "Yes, what happened to Haniel?", I answered instantly. Without hesitation, the homeless man lifted his right hand and put it on my forehead. She was sweaty and filthy, but that didn't bother me. As soon as he touched my skull, something happened in my head.

Like out of nowhere, I found myself in the maze of my memories, as if I could now find my way in the labyrinth of my brain. Within a blink of an eye, I saw my whole life and the lives before in pictures pass before my inner eye.

Now I knew what had happened to Haniel, but I could experience a lot more. I've had been to earth plenty of times, sometimes male; sometimes female. I was able to see myself fighting in countless wars and as a shepherd in green meadows. I build cities all around the globe or burned them down elsewhere. I was a medic in the Middle Ages and I hunted witches with flaming torches through dark forests. I hid Jewish children in my basement, till the Nazis came and punished me by taking all our lives. I rode camels through never-ending deserts and tamed wolves surrounded by high mountains. I gave birth to children and lost them through sickness and starvation. I was on site when the pyramids were built and I saw myself crafting weapons from sticks and stones to hunt mammoths. I could see myself as a black man, being sold to white people and I could see myself as a pirate - throwing men into the open sea. I experienced the feeling of being hung and could feel plague bumps on my body. There was sort of orderly chaos in my head.

"You have mastered all necessary experiences.", sounded in my head. *"This is your last life on Earth. Then thou shall dwell with us, as one of us - in heaven!"* I suddenly shuddered. "What does that mean?" - *"You return, where you came from. That's all you need to know!"* I nodded and went through my memories step by step.

Every single memory in every incarnation was different, but one picture was always the same. Sometimes it happened all lifelong; sometimes it happened only for a night, but, it happened - in each life. When I woke up in the morning and glanced at my side, I had the same eyes next to me, every time. "Mary!" I whispered and tears started making their way down my face. "I... I do not understand. Is she in this world, right now?" I investigated with a shaky voice. *"Yes, on her way. Have patience!"* - "But... how did I meet her in the park?", I countered. *"She left life for a short while, just to be with you."* Silently I set my gaze straight ahead. Then, the Angel took his hand from my forehead. After thinking for a few moments, I turned to him and gazed into the homeless man's face: "She... was dead?" - *"Yes, it had to be."* With a short "Okay" I simply nodded.

Next, I requested another answer: "What happened to Haniel? Is she dead?" - *"Over the clouds, resting, waiting."* I got back in response. "What is she waiting for?" - *"For God to come back."* A feeling of shock arose in my body and I tore my eyes wide open. "What's that supposed to mean?" I stammered with a shaky voice. *"He's on Earth, somewhere. Only when his body dies, he comes back. So, it is - every time."* A lump formed in my throat and I had to swallow a few times till I could talk on: "What's he doing down here?" The homeless man turned his head to me and whispered: *"He concerns his dearest proteges!"* The feeling overwhelmed me and I pulled my head back. After a short break, I broke the silence, quietly but caring: "He can bring Haniel back to life?" - *"Yes, only he can."* - "So, it's just a matter of time?" The homeless man nodded lightly and smiled at me.

"Do you have any other questions?", urged in my head. I gazed at the countless trees in the area and thought carefully. "I don't think so!" - *"Good. Ask for help whenever needed, but remember: If you ask to scare flies away, don't kill the spiders we send."*

With this sentence, the sparkle in the eyes of the homeless man had vanished. He stared at me in confusion, shook his body and inquired: "Where am I?" With a smile, I answered: "You're in good hands. Let's have dinner. You're invited!"

Chapter 7

I invited the homeless man for dinner and we spend the evening chatting. His name was Alex and he actually was a trained electrician. He ended up on the streets because of divorce and some silly incidents along the road. I decided to help him and offered my couch to crash for a night. He could shower, shave and have some of my old clothes. Afterward, he looked like a new man.

In total, I spent three more months in London. Then, I went back to my homeland. Since the day in Kyoto Garden, I had changed noticeably. I didn't think of my life as boring or monotonous anymore, because I fought. Every day anew, I put up with myself and tried to conquer all my bad thoughts. I finally knew where they came from and I used this to my advantage. I often asked the Angels for protection or help, so in the end, the best possible would happen to all parties involved.

In the last few weeks in London Alex came over on a regular basis and slept at my apartment - when it was too cold or raining outside. Finally, I offered him my job at the cemetery and he agreed. Even my apartment and my furniture became his. I felt like I was just passing my life in London on. I was happy to help and Alex showed me his gratitude countless times. In the end, the whole thing also had advantages for me, because I didn't have to take care of anything, at all. I just grabbed my suitcases, said goodbye to Tom and Alex and left the city.

In Germany, I got my old job back and by skillfully negotiating, I could even improve my old salary. I moved into a beautiful rental apartment in the city center with a nice sunroom and spent a lot of time reading and browsing the internet. As often as I could, I spend time in the open. The winter garden was perfect for me and the longer I had to deal with the angels, the easier it got. It became kind of a hobby I could participate at any day or night time, no matter where I was. I simply channeled myself and made contact. After some time, I became calmer and serene. No matter what happened, I just didn't lose it anymore.

Many of my fellow men started to address me and asked what had happened in England, since I was always smiling. My answer was the same, every time: "I found myself!", and this was true, too. I felt a lot more relaxed and even when having bad luck, I felt like it was not bad. Ultimately, I knew, this would be a great thing in the end.

The months flew by and I started drawing, again. Initially, in secret and only in private, I improved my skills and became confident. By the time I learned to use the brush and other utensils - I started to paint. Then I spread my work on the internet and showed it to the world. It took months, but eventually, the right person became aware of me and I could sell some of my paintings. It was a great success and the start of a tremendous future.

It was at about this time - meanwhile, I was back from London for three or four years - when I walked through town and ran a red traffic light. I was heavily captured by a car, flew through the air only to slam onto the windshield of an oncoming vehicle. When I woke up again, I was laying on the cold ground and didn't really know what had happened. Once more, I remembered my childhood and the scaffold climbing. But this time, it was not my mother but someone else shaking my body. I needed some moments first until I even knew what was going on. Every single bone in my body was hurting and yet, I scrambled up and knocked the dirt off my clothes.

I found myself in a kind of delirium, a woman constantly grabbing and talking to me. I was a bit confused, did not pay any attention to her and screened my body myself. It was only when I had been fully apprised, that I looked up and spotted them: The most beautiful eyes in this world. Reflex-like I started to smile and said: "Hello!" After that, I blacked out.

I woke up in a hospital bed. Next to me - she sat. I knew immediately; she was my children's mother. Her eyes revealed it. She was wearing long black hair and had a beautiful face, framed by two strands. Her cheekbones stood out and the black glasses completed the secretary look. I was in love immediately, probably for the first time in my life.

When she noticed me being awake, she came closer and took my hand. She apologized a thousand times and I told her at least a thousand and one times, everything was good. I was not hurt badly but had only a concussion and a few broken ribs. Nothing that wouldn't heal within a few weeks. I was even thankful for my injuries, as they had brought Maria into my life.

After sitting quietly in the sterile room for an awkward minute, my future wife broke the silence: "How can I make this up?" I straightened my gaze in the air and asked for help in my mind. After I had vigorously inhaled and exhaled, I replied: "I am a nurse and I know how weird the hospital food tastes. What do you think about... while I'm in here, you take care of me?" Immediately, the ice was broken and we started to entertain ourselves. From then on, she came by daily and brought me my supper. Every day she sat with me in the hospital room and we talked. The hours just flew by.

She told me about her life, where she had grown up, about her work, her friends and acquaintance circle. We found we had a lot of common friends. Probably there had only been one connection missing over the years and countless coincidences had to happen so we wouldn't meet. She also told me about a diving accident a few years back, when she was dead for a few minutes and only survived by the enduring intervention of a stranger. In my spirit, I thanked whoever he was.

After I was dismissed from the hospital, the game went on at my house and before I knew it, I had a roommate. I loved my life. Particularly every morning, when I checked the pillow next to mine and glanced into these wonderful eyes.

The years went by in flight. We got married, I became a dad and devoted myself increasingly to my art. By the time my little family could live off it, I quit my job in the hospital and made room for someone else. A lot of time had passed, but I had fulfilled my teenage dream. Apparently, it was never too late to let your dreams come true.

I was thinking about London a lot and tried to keep in touch with Tom and Alex. We talked regularly on the phone – about whatever was going on in the other one's life. Especially to Tom, I kept the contact close. At least once a week we called each other - until the day when an unknown number appeared on my display. I was just watching the news about a missing boy, who had apparently been kidnapped.

On the phone, I had Tom's mother, crying heavily. I had to reassure her for a few minutes. Only then I could understand what she was trying to tell me. Her son had died of a heart attack a few days ago. He went to sleep peacefully and never woke up again. She had tried to call him for days, but nobody answered the phone. Helpless as she was, she reached out to the police, but they could only determine his death.

She just called me, because her son had narrated a lot about me and she wanted me to know. While she went on, the newscaster reported about the missing child. Out of nowhere, the spokesman had a slip of tongue: "Haniel is back!" Actually, the child was called Daniel, but I knew what this was about. I rethought: "Was Tom ..." It took some time, but then:

I understood.