

Wir waren hier by Nana Rademacher  
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Nana Rademacher

## We Were Here

### Part One

Anna's Blog

#### 13th of October - Back on the Roof

My netboard is working again, as of a few days ago. I found an old memory chip in a ruined house just down the street and switched out the burnt one.

We had been in that house before - Luki, Santje, and me. That time we discovered an old radio that even had functioning batteries in it. This time, we climbed all the way up to the top. And in a room full of debris from the caved in ceiling, with upended bookshelves and a demolished desk, I pushed rubble to the side, and there, just barely protected by a piece of wood, was a pretty old but really good board, lying there as if it had been waiting for me. At home I took it apart, and there it was, the chip.

I've been looking for something like this forever. Platinum solar! I still had to wait until we had electricity again so I could recharge my netboard. The battery is still pretty good. How massive they used to be!

Then I went straight up to the roof to see if the chip still works, and if I could still get online with it somehow.

Actually, it's my father's utterly ancient board, but he doesn't care about it anymore. After all, he thinks it's broken. And he knows that I'm always tinkering around with something. So he doesn't think to ask about it.

The top layer of the screen on my roll-up peeled off, that can't be repaired anymore. The board is old, old enough to be one of the models that folds open. You

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can't even remove the display. You can't just to roll it up and stick it in your pocket. But I can shove it under my sweater and carry it without anyone noticing.

For two years I couldn't write anything, and couldn't get into the net. It feels a little like coming home. I don't know anybody who can still get in. Not that anyone would admit it if they could.

I can't get online in the apartment. My parents absolutely cannot find out what I'm doing. They would flip out, because I Will Put Us All In Terrible Danger. And then they would want to know what's going on in the world. Everyone always wants information, wants to know what's happening.

The net for our Smart-Eyes doesn't exist anymore and so they're essentially worthless. But the soldiers use their Smart-Eyes, at least some of them do. Supposedly they have their own net.

The All-Net is still running. Not particularly stable, but it works, at least it has up until now. It's almost a little creepy. I was hoping against hope it would be, but also thought the web-police had just shut it down for good. Or are they using it too? I have no idea. Lots of sites are unreachable or blocked now, and I'm supposed to register. Just like it used to be. But at least my favorite manga series is still up, even if there's nothing new there. And my blog hasn't been taken over either! The WePo can't control absolutely everything.

From the beginning, I hid the blog on a pretty remote offshore server, and I wonder why they still have electricity. But it actually still exists. I interconnected a few ZPL channels and use an elite proxy. That's how I escape the WePo-radar. I hope so, at least. That makes the board pretty slow sometimes. But I can write (get a load of this: I'm typing! The voice box is broken), and maybe there's someone, somewhere, who can read this. And sometimes I wonder what it would be like if someone read this in a hundred years or so. And I hope that this someone is happy and has enough to eat and says, "Man, am I glad those dark times are behind us, and that all people are free and have enough to eat." But maybe in a hundred years there won't be anyone left on the Earth at all. As Mrs. Weber from downstairs always says, "If things keep going like this,..."

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I haven't told a single soul that the board works again and I'm back on the Net. Not even Luki, my best friend. People have been killed for less already. Much less.

From up here, I can see all of Berlin. It's calm in the city and shots are only occasionally heard. The uprisings continued until yesterday. It started again about a week ago, like the pressure in a volcano building up until it suddenly explodes. But nothing ever changes. Everything just gets even worse. We run from corner to corner. Jump as fast as we can over the mountains of rubble. Shots ring out again and again, even during relatively quiet times. And my mother Worries Herself Nearly To Death whenever I leave the house.

But at least it's gotten safer on the roof. When I was little, drones flew over the rooftops every day and helicopters thundered low over the houses. Then came the air strikes. That's almost completely a thing of the past. Have they run out of fuel? They sure seem to have enough for the jeeps and tanks.

My father is never out on the streets with us when there's fighting, because he's too scared.

I Don't Know If It's A Good Idea To Bite The Hand That Feeds Us.

Feeds us? My mother is nothing but skin and bones nowadays.

We Don't Need Any More Dead.

If he doesn't want us to die, he should fight, and not hope that holding still will change something. But we can be glad that he's with us. His right leg is a little shorter than the left, and because of that he isn't any use as a soldier.

We have something like martial law going on now, in case anybody wants to know.

People say that rebels live in the subway tunnels under the city and survive by eating rats and woodlice. I can't imagine that. Rats. Disgusting. Woodlice, maybe. In any case, I don't want to go see if there's anyone there.

As always, the end of summer means there is very little water. The rations are less and less. Almost nothing comes from the pipes, and when it does, it's a warm, brown sludge that you don't even want to use to wash up. The soldiers bring us water in big tank

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trucks, and we fill our canisters. The transports are heavily guarded. At night they project the time in the sky with lasers, and which section is up next, and of course, the location of the rationing station. And at the very end LOCKDOWN UNTIL SUNRISE, so that people don't get in line right then, like they used to. My mother is too weak to carry the canisters, so I'll go with my father as soon as it's light out.

When we go outside, the first thing we do is look up at the sky, like before, when the drones were still flying. As if they could still appear again at any moment. Also, of course, to see if there are any laser messages in the sky. But sirens always go off before the lasers. At least most of the time. A few times that didn't happen. We nearly missed out on finding out that the rationing station was open. My father said They Are Doing That On Purpose. They Are Starving Us.

When he walks next to me, I can feel his fear. Fear for me. I know that he'd like to put his arm around me and pull me close to him, but he doesn't do it, because he knows that I don't want to be treated like a child anymore.

It wasn't long ago there was another uproar when the water ran out before everyone in line had gotten some. Next to me an old man stumbled and fell down. I wanted to help him, but my father pulled me away. And then we heard the first shots. And I screamed and screamed and screamed the whole time, "We have to help him!" But my father grabbed me by the shoulders and shook me until I was quiet.

We dragged the canisters home. In silence. I had cotton in my ears and in my head. I would've liked to close my eyes, too, and sink into oblivion, down to the soft sandy bottom of a deep, deep ocean. But I had to pay attention to the street.

It's hot, my throat is bone dry, but the sun is about to set and then it will finally be a little cooler. Fiery red. It looks like the bombed out buildings are bleeding. Rough, jagged edges poke up into the sky. Like a mountain. There aren't many buildings left with intact roofs. We have one. I used to be able to see the television tower from here. Too bad that's not still standing. I got kind of fond of it.

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Actually I'm glad when summer ends. I already look like a dried up, red protozoan. But the thirst is usually followed by freezing. Which is better? Will it be a mild winter, or an icy cold one?

My father just took my mother by the shoulders and said, "We will survive this winter, too, do you understand? We will not die. None of us"

She just stood there and didn't say anything.

Everyone is afraid of the cold. Fear scuttles around like a panicked mouse that knows cats are lying in wait everywhere.

The board set itself for the 13th of October 2039. Could that be right? Saturday. I have to think of my mother. She's always talking about what used to be. She used to always look forward to the weekends. Now no one even knows what day it is. They used to get freshly baked BREAD from the BAKERY and RAISIN BUNS and then thought about where they would go for a PICNIC. Now nothing makes her happy anymore. Before, when there was still work, before, when there was still a grass-green springtime and colorful leaves in autumn, before, when there was still peace. Those days are dead. Just like tomorrow is already dead today.

Ben (October 14, 06:23)

You are NOT the only one online. Aren't you scared the WePo will catch you? They picked up one of my brothers. He wrote whatever he wanted. About the war and the soldiers and the hunger. You can hide your blog wherever you want, but you still have to be incredibly careful. At some point they'll find you, no matter what. And until then, at least try to use the ARS connection instead of ZPL.

We have a tv tower in Hamburg, too. My brother would stare at it every day, as if it were a rocket ship that would take him away from this planet. We can see it from the kitchen window. I wish our television tower was gone, too. Anna sounds kind of old fashioned. Is that really your name?

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Anna (October 16, 08:40)

Have you gone completely mad, or what? Are you trying to scare me? I'm not a coward!  
I'll write what I want to. And Ben isn't exactly the most trend-setting name, either. How  
did you find me, anyway? I you're from the WePo, just come out and say it!

Ben (October 18, 12:01)

Anna, do you have nice hair?

Anna (October 18, 12:07)

WePo or not?

Ben (October 18, 12:09)

If I were with the WePo, I would have arrested you a long time ago.

Anna (October 18, 12:10)

You'd have to figure out where I am first.

Ben (October 18, 12:11)

So, do you have pretty hair?

Anna (October 18, 12:12)

Are you flirting with me?

Ben (October 18, 12:13)

The way you write, you must be one of a kind. Of course I'm flirting.

Anna (October 18, 12:14)

Cut that out!

Ben (October 18, 12:14)

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Never, Anna! I like your name.

Anna (October 18, 12:15)

You're pretty brazen.

Ben (October 18, 12:16)

Only here. I'm actually kind of shy.

Anna (October 18, 12:16)

I don't believe you. Shall we stop?

Ben (October 18, 12:16)

Why?

Anna (October 18, 12:17)

I'm cold. And it's starting to rain.

Anna (October 20, 10:40)

I wish I could fly away, too. Into another universe. I imagine a green field, with colorful flowers and a tree in the middle. I let myself fall into the tall, soft grass. The sun shines on my face and tickles my freckles. It's never too warm, and never too cold. I reach into the sky and pick an apple.

### **1st of March – Luki**

The rubber band broke. There were awful uprisings. Everyone is too hungry. Luki, Daisy, Santje and I were in the middle of it all. We ran away from the Jeeps and tanks as fast as we could. We almost made it. We ran down a street and we were the only ones there.

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Away from the crowd you have the best chance, right? That's what I had learned, anyway.

But then something went wrong. Shots were fired above us, from a house. We just kept running, further and further.

It took a while for me to notice that Luki wasn't with us anymore. I went back immediately, always staying close to the walls of the houses. And there she lay. Perfectly still. She had a dark red hole in her forehead, and she was white, as if she didn't have any blood left inside her, but her skin was still warm.

The other two were there, too, but I sent them away again. Daisy should get Santje to somewhere safe. I just wanted them to go away; I wanted to be alone with Luki. I crouched down in the middle of the street and held her hand. No one was shooting anymore. Although right at that moment I wished they were, and that they would shoot me, too.

Luki's fingernails were painted blue. Just like mine. Luki got the nail polish from her mom for her birthday and we tried it out right away. And now I was sitting there staring at her hand and all I could think was that we would never do anything else together, ever again.

At some point I dragged Luki from the street to the doorway of a house. And then all the other bad stuff happened. My parents and her parents. Luki's mother was as white as if she had died herself. Then my father set off with Luki's parents. I led the way.

Luki was my best friend. Wannsee lake is dried up and there's a gash in my heart. No one can ever fix that. I will never see her again.

Ben (March 4, 12:01)

I am so sorry.

Ben (March 20, 12:00)

Anna Scorpion, are you mad? Believe me, I have to take care of my brother. I always tell you the truth. I'm out in the city and try to get fresh water to keep his wounds clean.

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There are no drugs or medications. I even beg the soldiers. He's not doing well, he has gangrene.

It's horrendously hot where we are, too, but there's often a breeze from the sea. On nice days I sometimes walk to the Elbe River. Back when we first got to Hamburg, there were still seagulls everywhere. When I fall asleep at night, I dream of their screaming and the waves. Do you think they kept going towards the sea?

Anna (March 20, 12:06)

I wish the officers and generals would head off to the ocean like the seagulls. And all the soldiers right after them.

Ben (March 20, 12:11)

And because it's night, they fall over the edge of the cliffs into the water.

Anna (March 20, 12:13)

And disappear forever.

Have you ever been to the countryside? You're not actually from Hamburg, are you?

Ben (March 20, 12:20)

We moved here when the war started. My brother, my mother and me. I like the Elbe.

Anna (March 20, 12:26)

Ben Widemouthfrog likes water and always tells the truth. I really hope your brother gets better soon.

Ben (March 20, 12:27)

Ribbit!

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## **11th of November – A Dream**

In reality, we never did move to the country. My parents were too weak. First my mother died and then my dad a few days later. Just like that. He could have stayed alive longer, I know it. He sometimes used to say, “If you’re lying on the ground you have to pick yourself up again.” Like a boxer.

He didn’t do it. He held my mother in his arms and followed her. And me? He didn’t ask me if I wanted to join them. I woke up in the morning, but he didn’t. I wanted to just die, too, but it didn’t work. I hated myself for that.

The apartment is their grave. I locked the door behind me; no one should get them.

I moved onto the roof, with the last container of water. I put on all the warm clothes that were in the house. I’m sitting still, with my back against the railing. Overnight winter has arrived and there is a thick layer of snow on the cans of food, the plastic bucket and the wilted plants. I’m reading in our tattered gardening book. We did everything according to the instructions, but the whole project with growing things still didn’t work out very well. Maybe we didn’t have enough soil. Or there was something wrong with the seeds, or there wasn’t enough rain.

When I fall asleep at night, images of Ben fill my head. It isn’t possible to delete someone from your heart. That’s the truth.

I came up with the beautiful life in the country to ward off the cold and the dark and the fear. But that’s all over now. I am warm and very tired. My eyes are falling shut. My fingers are stiff.

It’s strange that I still have electricity. The city is entirely dark.

Tomorrow I’m supposed to turn sixteen. November 12, 2040. So that won’t work out either. Completely idiotic.

Shots are still being fired, and the tanks are rolling. But it’s more peaceful than usual. The fresh snow absorbs all sounds.

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We should have gone to the countryside earlier, when there was still time. Back  
when everyone knew that it was going to get bad.

But there really are blue trees.

They'll be my gift to the world, when I die now.

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Ben (November 11, 21:32)

Anna! The soldiers got me. But I'm free again. I want to meet up with you!

Anna (November 11, 21:40)

How am I supposed to know you're really Ben?

Ben (November 11, 21:41)

Let's meet where we saw each other for the first time.

Anna (November 11, 21:43)

I can't. I'm on the roof.