

Dirk

by Julia Kohli

Translated from the German by Rob Myatt

The cream is cooling. Dirk holds his breath, pulling the rolled up leg of his tracksuit trousers back down over his right calf carefully. He wipes his sticky fingers on his t-shirt and looks at the silver tube with the black snake's head printed on it. The bifurcated reptile tongue lolling ambivalently out of the small opening of its mouth. Odd picture for a medical product. The snake, companion of Asclepius, makes sense but why just a head, with no tail? And is that thing even called a tail? Or a tail-body? Body-tail? Dirk puts the tube back in the medicine cabinet exactly where he found it. Ana must never find out about the thing on his leg.

It'll all be alright, you've come through worse, he whispers to himself. As he washes his hands, he thinks about a school trip where he shat blood because of a salmonella poisoning. He reaches for Ana's hairbrush, gives his golden, waist-length hair a good long brush and thinks about bacteria, antibiotic resistance and his immune system.

A moth squirms in a spiderweb next to the bathroom mirror. The fluttering, dusty little thing fighting for its life. Dirk splashes water on his face, his neck, touches a hand to his forehead which feels perfectly normal, not at all hot. Another aspirin just to be safe. He reaches for the green package which he bought a few days ago at Munich airport and which already feels old and strange to him.

The squawk of a peacock, as dreadful as a cat that has been run over, pierces the bathroom. He's not going to be able to sleep like this. Dirk's eyes narrow, his jaw grinds, a vein pops out on his left temple. He is disappointed by his testiness, leaving him even more testy. Back in Germany, he had been imagining that he would be more laidback in Mexico City, a new Dirk, Mexico City Dirk.

The peacock is persistent. Another 'ayooo' echoes around the courtyard. Dirk reaches for a bar of soap as if it were a hand grenade, opens the window and sticks his head out into the night air. A cool wind blows across his agitated vein. The night, the Mexicans, everything out here is having a laugh at his expense. A silvery murmur rustles through the rosewood trees, whispering about this peculiar German man with the blond hair, the idiot with the inflamed leg. The branches, like frozen bolts of lightning, stretch up to the sky, perhaps making contact with heavenly forces, whipping jolts of electricity directly into Dirk's neural pathways. A sea of violet flowers glimmers above his head, prancing and quivering, as if it's fucking carnival season. The peacock is nowhere to be seen.

Shhhhhhh, Dirk hisses. He doesn't dare make too much noise. Someone might think he's crazy. People have probably been whacked off for less here. But in the street, nothing moves, just a few lazy petals lying around. The city answers back with distant police sirens, the usual yapping of a stray mongrel. He takes a deep breath, his testiness crumbles, decays, as he is about to get angry again, transforms into an iron block in his chest. Mood swings, for fuck's sake, what's this city doing to me, is it my time of the month, am I pregnant, is it the food? Dirk's throat is swelling up, his tear ducts hurt. Close your eyes quickly, scrunch them up, wait for the moment to pass. That peacock. Why does he feel like he knows that call from

the past? From some sort of parallel past? A former past? As if the squawk of this peacock could retrace every cell division, every stage of alienation from the Big Bang to the cell, right up to the cutting of the umbilical cord. Solitary carbon compounds set to a linear soundtrack. Dirk hits his head against the window-frame.

The soap still in his clenched fist. He sniffs it. Sandalwood. Bloody hippie smell. Ana probably chose it. Two heavy tears come unstuck from the corners of his eyes, fall from the second floor, unusually slowly, even though that's not possible, glitter briefly in the dim yellow of the streetlight and land in the cactus patch.

Dirk closes the window. Where'd this bloody melancholy come from? There's absolutely no reason for it. He found Ana: manager of an IT company, death metal fan, like him, Zapotec, the hottest woman he's ever seen. This thing between them: a perpetual explosion. An explosion in slow motion, like the final scene of Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point*. Even just the thought of her is enough to make his insides explode in slow motion. Millions of drops of blood and splinters of bone shot into infinity to a Pink Floyd soundtrack. Dirk regrets not knowing anything about the Zapotec. He should fix that. His sixteen semesters studying Romance languages are of no use to him here.

He met her, this Zapotec goddess, while waiting by the toilets after the Ancient Infection concert. It was the only reason Dirk had come to Mexico City, a spontaneous decision he made because he had resolved to only do what he wanted to from now on. She approached him, asked him what products he uses in his hair, checking him out as if he were some exotic plant. Dirk blushed but, given the uniqueness of this magical moment, collected himself and invited her out for a beer. And in fact, he now realises, in this bathroom, in this apartment in Polanco on Avenida Schiller, it was precisely that day when his life began. Germany has shrivelled to a hazy legend, a vale of tears at the other end of the earth, populated by hunched-over grey namby-pambies.

Dirk wipes away the last bit of water from his lashes with his sleeve. It would all be perfect. If not for this leg. He steps into the empty bathtub fully clothed and tries to remember Germany. What was it he'd been doing there? As a teenager, he had tried his hand at being a Satanist, reading the works of Aleister Crowley, burning frankincense and myrrh, carving poems into pieces of wood in runes, ordering billowy black clothing from the Goth catalogue, studying its classifieds, maintaining great pen-pal friendships – yes, they had those back then – with other Satanists. But he had designed his own mini Satanism, not bothering anyone. Dirk Ackermann was no sheep – not then, not ever. His cult didn't slaughter chickens or hold any other sort of grisly rituals out in the woods. Put on your headphones, stick on some Ancient Infection, stroll through Munich's pedestrian areas in a fluttering cape, letting yourself be guided by the rattling scream of the lead singer, that's what his routine had been. It was the only way he was able to stand the grannies encased in their quilted jackets, with their poodles and their golden eyeglass chains, the shrill girlies showing off their midriffs in low-rise jeans, the intellectually challenged rabble of football lads, the only way he was able to survive his messed-up Catholic family, all that petty bourgeois crap. He has remained loyal to Ancient Infection. Why he gave up the rituals with the herbs he really couldn't say.

In a few hours, he is going to Oaxaca with Ana. Could get complicated. He had his first fight with her yesterday. Don't worry, I'll introduce you as my boyfriend, not my fiancé, she reassured him when she suggested the trip to him. My family have never met anyone from

Germany. Why are you emphasising Germany as if it's a disease? asks Dirk. You've got almost a hundred fascists in the Bundestag and a notable history, in case it had slipped your mind. Ana also gave him the exact number of Alternativ für Deutschland MPs in Saxony and Thuringia. Dirk had underestimated her, he was annoyed, impressed, ashamed, wanted to justify himself but was overcome with a sense of defiance; why should he, after all he wasn't to blame for the misery. He opted for a strategy that had so far worked with all metal girls. Again, he's not into bloody politics, never votes, all politicians are corrupt anyway, lobbyists, power-obsessed, paedophiles, just look at them, the system, the structure, it's inherently broken and so on. Big mistake.

As a German? As a German, you do not vote?

Ana sprang up, slapping his arm away from her shoulder.

For a brief second, he felt afraid.

It's precisely pseudo-intellectual people like you that are the problem, she screamed at him. You don't give a shit about anyone, all that matters is you and your childish needs, you travel around and goggle at the poor people, listen to concerts, head back to your Nazi village, then live another fifty years in a detached house with some dutiful, apolitical barbie, twiddling the knobs on your synthesiser, buying the odd vinyl and all that without ever once having used your democratic rights. All the while looking on as these right-wing pigs reconquer your country. I would be ashamed.

Dirk had nothing to offer in return. Normally, he would at least have shouted back, demanded respect, stormed off, would have cursed out the bitch who was accusing him of these things; back home, he would have gone to one of the pertinent forums and read up on how to handle women like this.

Instead, after Ana's tirade he stared at his feet for an hour, eventually grabbing some food from a takeaway place round the corner after sheepishly asking her what she wanted. She, meanwhile, sat at her computer, programming furiously.

The seventh day has broken, the seventh day of my life, thinks Dirk, feeling his strength leave him. Yesterday, after the fight and after they had made up again half-heartedly, his calf had begun to burn. Half-asleep, half-cursing, he scratched at it bloodily, ripping off the still healing tattoo with his dirty fingernails. It was possible the whole thing had become inflamed much earlier but his joy had been so overpowering in the last week that he hadn't noticed it in the slightest.

Part of the blame for his misery lay with two Chinese girls. Barely two weeks ago, at a gender studies seminar he had booked for field research purposes. Wanted to know what feminists talked about all day long. Attending gender studies seminars had become the new trend in the men's forums he frequented for fun on an occasional, meaning daily, basis: a bit of reporting back and swapping notes, talking about the different types of ugliness among women. How long their leg hair was, their armpit hair, how many spots, wrinkles, how bad their teeth were, which ones would cry first. A bit of fun to finish off his studies.

Just before the start of the seminar, a unit on "The Transformation of Masculinity", he had asked a Chinese exchange student if he could sit next to her. Sorry, taken, she had said. Okay. At the same time, she rummaged around in her stupid kitty pencil case, covered in glitter

with an idiotic glitter kitty dangling from it. Dirk had smiled, as he always did, and sat down in the first row next to a guy with painted nails and a purple woollen jumper.

He had dug out his Intro to Intersectional Feminism text, carefully annotated with pink highlighter, and scanned it once more. When the second woman entered, the one the seat was being kept for, also Chinese, the two began sniggering furiously behind Dirk's back, saying all sorts of things in Cantonese or Mandarin, he couldn't tell the difference. He listened, though, quite intently, wondering what could be so funny, until he was certain that, in amongst that incomprehensible nattering, he heard the word "incel". Yep, there it was. A second time even: "incel". Those two syllables had slowly bored their way into his back, "in", "cel". Involuntary celibate. Loser of the century. To the women attending this seminar, he was some lonely, women-hating troll wanker.

The room shrank and began to feel stuffy. Incel? Him? How? He had had countless relationships. His ex, Daria, had next-level tits. Every incel's dream. And, unlike an incel, Dirk read ancient poetry, was interested in philosophy. Incels didn't have the cerebral wherewithal to even begin to untangle the works of Sophocles, Kant, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer. And spots he hadn't had for ages either. He looked like Chris Hemsworth, Daria once had told him, before she left him. He went by the title of Sexiest Man Alive, as he discovered when he had Googled the guy. Incel indeed.

At that, Dirk packed up his texts again and left the seminar. If he hadn't, he probably would have throttled those Chinese ducklings. His anger towards the pair grew and grew over the next few days. It justified his consuming hours of S&M porn featuring tied-up Asian girls. He had always found the genre rather off-putting before – but after the incident at the gender studies seminar, new spaces opened within him. And the idea for the tattoo materialised.

In the bathtub, Dirk feels the weight of his body. He inspects his leg again carefully. A bit of his trouser leg is stuck to the mixture of pus and cream. Greasy red pustules mix with the black and red of the ink. His calf feels like it's on fire. If he had a knife in his hand right now, he would cut that piece of skin right off. The design alone had cost him a full two-hundred euros. The illustrator had done a damn good job. But she hadn't looked him in the eye even once, hadn't smiled even once as she handed him the piece, just reached out her hand, pocketed the two hundreds, twirled on her heel. Getting inked at the "Underworld" studio cost him another four-hundred. The tattoo artist didn't say anything, though he did give him a few too many studying looks. Shithead, thought Dirk. That was two weeks ago.

He stares at the ceiling. How happy he had been sauntering through the shitty old town with his tattoo, giving all those enviro-chicks, women's libbers and old quilted jackets a fright. Kink-shaming, prudishness, intolerance and so on, he would have thrown the lot of it in their faces, would have whipped out his wagging index finger, their dopey mouths only ever half-open. His tattoo didn't break a single law.

By now, his right thumb had drilled a deep hole in the soap. Dirk is starting to feel a bit queasy. He puts the piece on a shelf where a book by a Rupi Kaur is sitting. He lifts it up and cracks it open to page 119 where Ana has folded over the corner. Dirk reads, "you are snakeskin". And he reads the poem to the end. Dammit, not again. Beneath his fingers, a drawing of a snake shedding its skin.

Dirk blubs, is startled as he blubbers again right away even though he doesn't find the poem any good since it uses the word "exquisite" and that's too pathetic. He puts the book back down, leans back, takes a deep breath in, tries to relax. He inspects his hair and finds ugly little split ends everywhere. He looks around for some scissors but there aren't any. The thought occurs that he could dye his hair black. Maybe then he'd pass for a Mexican, could disappear here forever.

Do not, under any circumstances, mispronounce Oaxaca. Uahaca, Uahaca, Uahaca, Dirk whispers. Munich is 6,115 miles away. You're what I call a real woman, he said to Ana once they had eaten and Dirk was fairly confident their first fight was over. Very feminine. And natural.

Dirk, that's what the sex tourists in Tijuana say, she retorts. It was the first time she'd said his name.

It was a compliment!

Blondie, you haven't done your homework.

Don't call me Blondie. It's hurtful.

Hurtful. Amazing. And what about me being feminine? Natural? How am I supposed to take that?

I just thought, since you're not ashamed of your body. German women are always whinging about their bodies, they're stuck-up, money-obsessed. Dammit, he'd already blown the harmony he had wanted to conjure up, he couldn't do anything right.

You think you're at Disneyland? And I'm Pocahontas? Are you going to explain to me later the right way for me to emancipate myself too?

Forget it. He turned over and pretended to sleep.

No, I'm not going to forget it. Fucking explain to me again what a natural, feminine woman is! Were the ten women murdered by their husbands today in Mexico not natural enough?

Are you out of your mind, how can you compare it to that? Forget it! For a week, they had made love like a pair of rabid wild animals, wrapped around each other, for hours on end.

Feminine and natural! I'm going to be sick. Ana stood up, rolled herself a joint, went back to programming.

How many more times do I have to say it, it was meant as a compliment! He didn't mean it to come out whiny but his voice was shaking.

Next time, compliment me on my coding.

I don't know anything about coding.

Then I'll teach you.

He's dreading tomorrow's trip now. Not sure he's going to get through it. He heaves himself out of the bathtub, gropes his way along the dark corridor and gets back into bed with Ana. She wakes up for a second, places her warm hand on his belly, goes back to sleep again immediately. Dirk Googles into the early hours. Sepsis can cause the skin to turn black. He scrolls his way through pictures of inflamed tattoos. Feels like he is going to throw up, just for a moment. He searches for rash. You should seek urgent medical attention, especially if the rash appears suddenly, itches badly and spreads quickly. For five minutes, Dirk's heart beats like crazy, but his tiredness overpowers him. He falls asleep some time around three.

Warm light streams into Ana's apartment in the morning. The first time she drew the curtains. There is not a single picture hanging on the immaculately white walls. Instead, colourful mosaic chips gleam on the floor. Dirk only notices them now as he sticks his head over the edge of the bed and watches Ana watering the houseplants. There are even tiny little mirrors sunk into the floor, reflecting the sunlight. As Ana puts on some coffee, he quickly scurries into the bathroom. He wants a wash but on one leg it's not an easy ask in the bathtub. Dirk groans loudly as a splash of water does indeed land on the inflamed area. He might pass out. He rubs in the cream again. The cooling effect is less intense this time. He puts on his trousers, then a fresh t-shirt, takes two aspirin.

You look tired. Ana laughs at him and strokes him on the cheek. The drive to Oaxaca is going to take around six hours.

Dirk nods.

Hungover, by any chance?

I don't think so, says Dirk.

Ana hands him a glass of orange juice.

They set off. Ana's huge black Cadillac rocks sedately along the dusty roads. Dirk wants to talk about something, to restore normality but he doesn't have the energy. His eyelids flutter. He nods off. Jolts awake. Notices that his mouth is hanging wide open. Ana is cheerful and talking a lot, over-revving the engine, loudly, yesterday's fight seemingly forgotten. Look, that's where five members of the militia were dug up last month, that's where the best tequila comes from, that's where they decapitated a política and there, in the same village, that's where ten women were... Dirk only hears snippets. He would like her to stop. When he wakes up again, three hours have passed already. His head is buzzing, pounding, for a second he forgets to breathe, gasps for air. His t-shirt is wet. Oh God. I feel shit. This leg is going to kill me.

What? Ana is wearing earphones. She takes one of them out. What did you say?

Fever, says Dirk. I'm about to die of thirst, I feel shit.

Ana hands him a bottle of water. A shadow falls across her face.

I need to sleep some more. Dirk's lids fall shut again, his eyeballs as hot as two balls of magma. It's fever. He laughs inwardly. Nice and calm. Nice and calm. Stay calm. Your system's working. He chuckles, falls asleep, no longer noticing that Ana is stepping on the gas and using her phone at the same time.

Not ayahuasca, please, Dirk whimpers, as they enter the small apartment of Ana's auntie. I read an article about it, Dirk whispers, I don't want that stuff, but no-one is listening to him. He staggers his way onto a chair. Please, Ana, I don't want it. I need antibiotics.

Calm down, you're not getting ayahuasca, says the auntie.

He's called Dirk, says Ana.

The auntie reaches out a hand. I'm Maru.

Dirk wipes the beads from his forehead. You've got the same name as that cat on YouTube. The Japanese cat with the paper hat on its head. Dirk shivers, lets out a loud laugh, can hardly settle. He sees Maru shoot Ana a look and shake her head.

Lie down here. Ana helps him and Dirk flops onto a small sofa.

Drink. Maru holds out a glass for him, her bat wings slapping about.

Too loud, Dirk cries. My ears!

This will help with that fever. You'll feel better soon enough.

Dirk doesn't trust her but he takes the glass from her anyway, he is too thirsty. He sniffs at the green concoction, surprisingly fresh. He glugs greedily, sucking down everything until it feels like cooling tongues are healing his body from the inside, the feverishly hot fibres sucking together on a single point.

Ana, you need to leave for a second, says the auntie. Ana disappears. Show me where, Maru orders him. I know you have an inflammation. It's the right leg. Dirk has wanted to say those words for so long, he feels incredibly relieved. As he holds his breath, Maru lifts up his jeans and assesses his calf. He hears her speaking in another language, her brow wrinkling. That wasn't a good idea, Dirk. He hears her flitting about in the kitchen, cooking something up. He feels something cool on his leg. Then it all goes pleasantly dark. He hears her calling out. Go into the forest, Dirk, he hears, or so he thinks. Go into the forest.

And so Dirk goes, floating away. Before him, an endless, dusty road that evaporates on the horizon. The air is cooling. He bows in front of an aloe shrub by the side of the road, greets an extremely friendly gecko. The critter nods, flicks his tongue in and out, shows Dirk the way. Certainty, at last. There is no resistance, everything is smooth. I am time, he thinks. It is a wondrous thought, as wonderful as the delicate magnolia blossoms lining the road. He reaches out his hand and strokes the soft petals as he passes. The flowers stroke him on his forearm, he giggles. The gecko is waiting for him on a rock and gives him a quick wink. Dirk can't help but laugh again and understands. All that is within him is understanding. It's simple. Dirk sees the forest, notices that he is barefoot, soft grass caressing his bare ankles. Hundreds of red blossoms pulsating on the ground. Dirk can hardly believe it, bends down, again touching the delicate blossoms that are emitting such an intense red that his heart does somersaults. He wants to touch it all, to smell it all, to take it all in.

To the forest, says the gecko. Dirk walks and walks and notices that he is already in the middle of the forest. A peculiar forest. The trees, tall birches, are stood far apart. Unusually tall, Dirk notes, unusually tall for birch trees. And birches? In Mexico? He tilts his head all the way back but he can't see the tops of the trees. They seem to be fused together high above him, must be miles. Here, to the fire, says the gecko in a pleasant, unobtrusive voice. At the foot of one of the birches sits a round white gondola. Very futuristic, thinks Dirk. And is already inside. He has company. Ionesco and Daria are sat there. Daria is holding a drink in her hand and beckons to Dirk.

Eugène, pleasure, says Ionesco, lighting a Muratti. He is wearing white tracksuit trousers, a white hoody and blindingly white trainers.

Daria is radiant. She uncorks a bottle of champagne. Pop! I'm looking forward to us travelling together!

As the capsule gently vibrates and suddenly lifts off, vertically, Dirk feels a wanderlust of the kind he felt as a kid. The gecko climbs onto his lap and immediately falls asleep. Dirk takes a sip from the champagne glass. The capsule quickly gains height, whooshing through the thicket of birch branches. Now and then, a branch whips the round glass front. Sounds like rain. And so it continues, for a long while, until the little vehicle shoots out of the sea of birches.

Dirk is not afraid because he knows that this here, this is something like the future and he is too important for anything to happen to him.

The capsule climbs, higher and higher, as if pulled by some silent force. I can still breathe, thinks Dirk. Of course I can still breathe. He does as Ionesco is doing and lounges on the white seats. Half-lying, he looks into the depths where the crowns of the birch trees are growing fainter and fainter and gradually disappearing behind a layer of clouds. The capsule slows, then comes to a stop. It does not fall, of course. It floats onwards horizontally, more leisurely now. Very practical, thinks Dirk, I didn't want to go to space anyway. Ionesco and Daria are chatting animatedly, sometimes looking over at him lovingly as if he were their child. That's absolutely fine by Dirk.

The contours of a gigantic building soon hone into view, yellowish white, indefinably long and wide as its ends melt among delicate wisps of fog. We're here, says Daria, putting down her glass. Come!

Welcome to the university, says Eugène. I'm the Dean here.

That doesn't surprise Dirk. The capsule stops in front of a small bridge, the door opens. Dirk follows the two of them to the building.

Alma mater. Alma mater. For the first time, Dirk feels at home in a university, safe even. People, all rather short, scurry past him, speaking in hushed tones.

Two women approach him. It's the two Chinese girls from the gender studies seminar. It's good to have you here, Dirk, says the one with the kitty pencil case, handing him a white sweater with an embroidered glitter kitty. They bow and leave.

Dirk feels grateful, strokes the fluffy garment and puts it on immediately. It is an excellent fit.

Overpowered with a fierce curiosity, he looks at the building, unable to break out of his astonishment as he enters the main atrium and sees an art installation that is seemingly in a constant state of metamorphosis. A woman approaches him and stands next to him: it's you, everyone sees themselves in it. Dirk nods, wants to look her in the eye but she has already vanished. He stands a while longer in front of this work that does not take on any particular shape, instead breathing in wonderful patterns, falling, only to rise up again. For a moment, his ego is like a friendly beluga whale. Dirk giggles. The cool marble floor beneath his feet feels good. He sits down on a bench in the shady cloister and takes a quick nap.

Has he been asleep for a hundred years?

Dirk has never felt so relaxed.

It occurs to him that he is going to get his essay back. He wrote about his hair. All about his hair. Twenty pages. Ionesco stands in front of him. He hands him the pages, nods, says "Snake's head". Dirk opens his mouth but can't say anything.

Ionesco winks at him and shuffles off. Dirk holds his essay in his hands, feels incredible pride, wants to read it again and sits down on the ground. Not a good idea, he realises, not a good idea. He can't make out the letters. His body folds in on itself like a one-tonne sack of flour, something pulling him downwards. He lays his head on the ground. Closes his eyes.

Birds tweeting. A baby crying, no, several babies crying. Someone turning on a tap, it splatters, rattles, squeaks. Dirk needs the loo. But he can't see anything. Something heavy is

lying on his chest. Haven't breathed in forever! Searing panic rushes through him, almost rupturing his lungs. For a second, he forgets how breathing works, then gasps for air, wheezes, coughs. It works.

Tranquilo. Tranquilo. Todo está bien.

Dirk wakes up again, bathed in sweat, his eyes glued shut, he senses movement. His right heel itches. Dirk rises up. Collapses. Rises up again, coughs until he cries. He sees someone dressed in white coming over to him. He puts his hands in front of his face, wants to defend himself.

Tranquilo. Tómallo.

Someone holds out a glass for him. He knows he needs to drink. He feels around the edge with his fingers, trying to hold the glass. Someone supports his head. His throat is so dry it whistles. He swallows, lies back down. Shaking. Shaking, freezing, sweating. But he can see more clearly now.

You are in the hospital, Señor Ackermann. In Oaxaca. I'm Dr Bosque. We had to transfer you to the maternity ward, in case you were wondering. We don't have space anywhere else. He clears his throat and looks at the floor. Señor Ackermann, I'm afraid we had to amputate. You had a serious blood infection. You'll be on antibiotics for the next three weeks.

Dirk nods. That's good.

The doctor raises his eyebrows, the corner of his mouth twitches as if he wants to say something but in the end he leaves it.

Where's Ana?

Your girlfriend is waiting outside.

Okay. And her auntie?

What auntie?

Maru?

Neither of Ana's aunties are alive anymore, I know the family.

Okay. That can't be.

What do you mean?

Ah, doesn't matter.

Where's my leg? Can I see it?

Your leg? You want to see it? Not bad! You're an unusual patient, I must say. He looks out the window for a moment, clears his throat. I'm sorry, it's too dangerous. The bacteria. I'm sure you're aware. We can't put the other patients in danger.

And later?

It's being kept in refrigeration and then we'll incinerate it. We could also set it in formaldehyde, of course. It would be interesting for the medical students. Because of the inflamed tattoo. As an object of study.

Okay. Fine. You can do that.

We'll see. Would you like to see your girlfriend now?

Yes.