



**Thomas Kunst**

**Zandschow**

Novel

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Sample translation pp. 10 – 24

## I

### Zanzibar, Apple blossom

Claasen is walking back the way to his car, which he parked in a side alley at the top of Verlaatstraße. His year in Levenhaug is over. His time with Silje and Weißäuglein is over. What he has just seen on the ground floor of that building has suddenly changed everything, his whole life narrative. The new man. The old dog. The insulin. There is barely anything left at home to remember him by. He takes the dog collar from the dresser and places it on the rounded dashboard of his car. He is likely to stand out thanks to his driving. His current driving does in fact stand out as he is trying to move his car so carefully, slowly and smoothly that the collar stays on the dashboard for as long as possible. Wherever it falls off, he intends to stop and start a new life. You would have to know Claasen to understand what is going on. He has three tries, so that he can rule out having to live in a forest, a cornfield or a river, which comes to a halt right next to the tracks. The town exit sign of Levenhaug does not count as one of those three tries. The hazard warning lights are ticking, and the vehicles are piling up behind Claasen. He would ideally keep on going straight ahead. Just don't take any turns that could end up leading him backwards. He waves to those overtaking him. It seems like an act of heroism for him to slow down the others, to prevent them from keeping to their deadlines and lapses. The first five hundred meters are already behind him. Horses and cornfields pass him by, but in reverse order. The collar is alive. There are no traffic lights here. For the last ten minutes or so, he has been trying to drive twenty kilometres per hour in third gear. This could go on for months. The

country road remains kind to him. In the collar itself, there is no chance to filter out the stale air.

Northern Germany is quite experienced when it comes to participating in broadcasts and off in the distance Kevin Keegan is being interviewed. Head over Heels in Love. In the old days, it was possible to be a soccer star and a pop singer at the same time. Ranked tenth in the sales charts. His football prowess relegated to the recording booth. We only ever love those who never make it to the top. What Claasen needs is the patience of those who are still alive. If accompanying a collar through the villages weren't so nice, he might actually have noticed that it is getting dark. The windshield wiper lever on the right side of the steering wheel cannot be turned for now. Purely a precautionary measure. Claasen recites the alphabet in the gradually gathering twilight. If, when pronouncing the letters H, M, P and Y, there is a tree on the left or right side of the road, he will go for countless more miles that night. Deviations of two to five feet are allowed. Let's not be petty about such things. There are almost the same number of trees on either side of the cab. Country road, highway, but in reverse order. A deer crossing would be just what he needs right now. Claasen ponders how the mileage under the danger signs comes about. Four point five kilometres. At four point six kilometres, he breathes a noticeable sigh of relief. Or should he rather have waited for another hundred meters before feeling safe? There are no studies to prove how exactly the distances within which the animals travel from one side of the road to another can be measured. Entrance signs and guideposts pass them by, but in reverse order. Claasen resolves to move his car so carefully, slowly and steadily that the collar stays on the dashboard as long as possible. At whichever point the collar falls, or appears to fall, he will stop the car and start his new life. Without music. Without self-pity. Without eternity or responsibility. To first leave the woods and cornfields behind him but in reverse order. He prefers to live somewhere where it would take too long for someone to reach him in an emergency.

He thinks the Jaguar is a piece of roadkill on the A7, left lane, almost dead, the body steaming, the darkness is red, he attempts to brake but the road will not allow it, his cracked lights, the black steaming pile, like excrement, the other lane resembles an animal sanctuary, perfectly timed, hypodermic, his heart skips a beat, he drives onwards, debris is scattered to the wind, yet according to the thermometer there is no snow to be found. He is allowed to stop three times to adjust the collar to a more advantageous position, closer to the windshield. For a moment he considers whether the hazard warning lights and the indicators share the same light source, which could explain why they are both lighting up at the same time. No houses. No breeding

barn. He drives and drives. The image of the man with the insulin syringe burned into his vision. Claasen's life had changed forever on that ground floor, he would have needed a world war for things to change, one in which Weissäuglein would have been spared. Once she had passed out while walking but a fingertip's worth of sugar under her tongue had brought her back to her old self. A fingertip's worth of sugar. The dog collar on the edge of the abyss. The floor mat is the pavement, but in reverse order. Zandschow. Zandschow. He has seen the name of this village somewhere before, heard it somewhere. Claasen remembers. It can't be that long ago that the current government made the decision to prohibit all accidents on the A7 between the Zandschow and Höverlake exits for a period of twelve months. This is a stretch of seventeen kilometres, of which four point five kilometres are designated for the purpose of allowing wild animals to cross the road. If they have made it undetected during the day or at night to the wooded areas between the country road and the almost parallel highway. And hopefully they did not forget to put up a danger sign here as well. But a warning like that would probably not do much on a motorway, so it made more sense for it to be put up here on a country road. Registering offences and accidents nevertheless resulted in heavy fines. People in this region have the choice to simply do without accidents.

Self-confident deer and pheasants, bored doctors, night nurses, insurance clerks, car mechanics, ambulance drivers and employees of the local towing service. They could all go to Cartagena for a sabbatical. There are no nonsensical government decisions like that there. However, I know of only one case of a deer taking advantage of the opportunity. The family still needs to be informed. Foreign health insurance should be obtained as soon as possible. Should something happen to the deer in the coastal city, DKV's services include arranging for a medical interpreter and organizing a visit by relatives. Night nurse Ines is still undecided. The constant rumours about the Departamentos del Chocó and de Norte de Santander in the more remote parts of Colombia. Landmines and scopolamine. Zandschow is a nest in the far north. A fire pond at its centre. Housing containers. Wolf's Drinkery. Apple trees. If everyone whose dog collar fell off the dashboard on this uneven street got stranded here, there would be no need to worry about what would become of this wasteland. Claasen has helped. He pulled over to the right side of the road. Zandschow. It takes months for me to get out of the car. The collar is getting in the way of things. Sundays. Hardly any business going on. If only I had pulled over here on a Tuesday or Thursday. The wide spaces between the weeping willows by the pond prevent thoughts of food, stimulants and housing authorities. But in reverse order. Getting out of one thing always means getting into something else too. I check to make sure I have all my documents in the glove compartment. The ADAC card is the one I need the least right now. Its

brightness annoys me. In the collar itself, there is no chance to filter out the stale air. After a few days and then weeks, I find myself pulling over at the same spot again and again. I've noticed that I start more conversations with locals as I am leaving than when I arrive. A few kilometres away, I roll down the window. The area seems impoverished but not dangerous. I get out and get back in again. By the pond. Between the trees. Out and back in again. But in reverse order. I am dressed carelessly. There are neither books nor pompous newspapers on the passenger seat. I put the collar on the bank and try to balance the inside with stones. Once I have placed the fifth stone, I decide I may stay here. To emphasise the helpless nature with which I want to stay here and be taken in by the villagers, I make an effort while sitting down to move the stones to the centre. Once I have placed the seventeenth stone, I have to take twelve stones out again. I hope such a method does not apply to everything here. Do not worry. I go back in again. I cannot hide the fact that the two slaves at Wolf's drinkery scare me. But the dog collar chose this for me. I will be staying in Zandschow. Wolf inherited the shop after his parents died. In the back there is a sunbed from Ergoline's Prestige range. The way UV light and the red beauty glow lead to the desired tan at the touch of a button is indescribably astounding. Skin care products are included. A selection of over three hundred colour schemes and light animations in the interior. Zanzibar, Apple blossom. African beers on the shelves. DjuDju Banana. Mongozo Palmnut. Windhoek Lager. Wolf peddles these drinks at knock-down prices. His grandparents had left their children a lot of money. In order to leave Zandschow, they stayed in Zandschow. Brought high-tech equipment. A sunbed and a Primera LX 900e full-colour label printer with separate ink tanks for cyan, magenta, yellow and black. The DjuDju Banana tastes like Maternus Gold without the banana. Mongozo Palmnut could easily be mistaken for a Perlenbacher Pilsner. And the Windhoek Lager shares a similar bitter freshness to Grafenwalder Strong. In addition to drinks, Wolf also sells everyday goods. Those who buy beer from him are allowed to go to Zanzibar for half an hour. His connections in the city are well known. He is friends with many artists and businessmen from the area. The labels on the bottles he designed himself drive up the alcohol content. An image of palm trees on the horizon. And instead of the sunset, a few flamingos are resting by the many salt lakes which define this continent.

The fire pond could also be easily mistaken for not being a fire pond. There is an island in the middle. Trees and benches on the shore. Michamvi beach. Twelve tables on the restaurant terrace. Every hour a boat crosses to the island. At peak times, we prefer to stay on the beach. Everyone, women and men, on the days on which they would like to deep their feet into the

Indian Ocean, has taken up the habit of dipping their feet in the Zandschow's very own Indian Ocean.

The North has a wealth of chemical resources, but if the Vynova Group had set up its two chlorine production plants in Zandschow and Höverlake as planned, the heart of life on the coast for the locals and those who immigrated to the area would have been lost. Zanzibar, the dream tan of former factory workers and dog owners. In order to ensure a secure supply of raw materials via seaports and pipelines, ChemCoast had switched at the last moment to the Voslapp and Rüstiersiel sites, located directly on the southern North Sea, with access to deeper water. When news of the change of plans came out, there was no holding back. The endurance of the beach became a certainty.

Every year around this time, Wolf organises the Darajani festival at the pond. He strings hammocks between the trees, has canoes pulled onto the beaches from the inland, distributes fruit and spices to the party goers, serves Windhoek lager at his own expense and organises the crossings to the island. At peak times, we prefer to stay on the island and take all twelve tables. You can row over to Nakupenda Beach if it's too crowded for you here. The workers' settlement of ChemCoast is almost uninhabited. First industry, then housing for the labourers, but in reverse order. Claasen is rarely there overnight. When he does stay, he goes back and then bolts his door from the inside with a plank. Sparse furnishings. Mattress. Table. Chair. Closet. Floor lamp. Exercise bike. The collar on the window handle. He prefers to spend the nights with the residents on the coast.

At El Santisimo, on the Calle del Torno, the price of a two-hour dinner includes all alcoholic drinks. Night nurse Ines has now gone to Cartagena for a year after all. The constant rumours about the Departamentos del Chocó and de Norte de Santander, which are miles away from her city, did not deter her in the end. Within the walls of Cartagena, two thousand police officers patrol daily. She leaves the less frequented areas like Getsemani and La Matuna unattended during the nights. In the bars, she puts a terrazzo-style jewellery bowl over her Coco Loco for fear of foreign spit and scopolamine. This is also how she pictures her house later on. A meter-thick, white, habitable pillar with a parapet in the highlands of Cartagena. A milky ice cube as an elevator. Permanent freshness in the elevator. Untouchable cabin dimensions. She works at Hospital Naval to pad her savings a bit. During the day, night nurse Ines sits next to a deer in the language school and feels as though the deer might have a higher linguistic competence than she does after just one week of classes. Like Ines, the deer lives at La Estrella, in a tent under a thatched roof, right by the beach. The loyalty to their home habitat that is usually

associated with deer is not present in this specific animal. First loitering around German highways, now learning Spanish in a language school in the San Diego district and lying down in a hammock to sleep at night. Live salsa with Cuban trumpets. The smallest main course. Arepa with butter and salt. In the two hours that Ines and the deer have left to drink, they celebrate the almost magical ease which defines their sojourn. The deer can already say a full sentence in Spanish, but only when drunk. I want to get my cab license. I don't have anything on my driving record in Flensburg yet, two years of practice crossing traffic islands and a good sense of orientation in bad weather. The police clearance certificate must be faxed over from Wilhelmshaven in a timely manner. The last ophthalmological examination was years ago. The loyalty to the habitat that is the hammock near the beach will not be the deer's undoing. On the weekends, the San Diego language school is closed.

In September, Wolf hosts the Francis Drake Festival on the beach. The Blockade of Cartagena is on the program. It is decided who is to be Drake, who is to be English, who is to be Spanish and who is to be a slave. For this, Wolf takes the 30 litre Halo illuminated fishbowl from his desk and puts it on a bench near the shore. Only two left in stock. Customers who brought this item also brought a pebble set and magnetic disk cleaner. Wolf labels little pieces of paper, folds them carefully, uses paper clips to greaten their ornamental worth and places them at the bottom of the tank. The role of the slaves has been the most coveted for years. Full of contempt, they seek revenge. The Spanish prisoners are brought ashore in boats. Drake has to restrain his Cimarrons, his own allies, so that they do not harm the enemy soldiers. They are only allowed to push the hated Europeans into the sea as soon as the coast is in sight. The escaped black slaves represent the greatest danger to the colonisers at the time. The highlight of the festival is always the broadcast of the multi-part television series *The Adventures of Sir Francis Drake* on the cinema screen on the beach amongst the palm trees. Of the thirteen episodes, nineteen hundred and sixty-seven aired on ARD, six episodes nineteen hundred and seventy-five still made it to GDR television. Claasen was ten at the time. Whenever the Golden Hind sailed into the living rooms and shot a broadside, Sundays around three in the afternoon, everyone wanted to be Diego, Drake's slave. A program of episodes can only be compiled after a language has been chosen, but in reverse order. Unreservedly recommended purchase for chemical workers and dog owners. Nineteen hundred and seventy-five was a good year for the GDR leadership. For there was also *The Men of Saint Malo*. The French, who fought the English and Spanish in Saint-Malo and the Caribbean in this series, also had good pirates. Nicolas de Coursic was our other hero, in case too many of us wanted to go as Francis Drake for Carnival. The first episode was on a Monday in early November. The Golden Hind was the *Sémillante*, but in reverse order.

The smallest revolution, therefore, could only begin on a Tuesday for the next six to twelve weeks. Nineteen hundred and seventy-five was overall a good year for our parents. On Saturdays we had lemon tart from Gager, on Sunday there was Francis Drake and on Monday we called ourselves Nicolas de Coursic. Only the pieces of paper labelled with the letter S got to go on the water the next day. Because the Spanish and the Slaves started with the same letter, we called the slaves Cimarrons in Zandschow.

But the North has a wealth of chemical resources, Wolf's Drinkery is mostly made of asbestos cement. Reconstruction is out of the question during the holidays. If it is not possible to avoid breaking the interior panels, the extensive wetting of the building's materials and the application of damp cloths would be useful to prevent the release of dust. In terms of hygiene measures, it is noted that in the case of asbestos cement removal operations that last longer than a few days, a showering facility or a tanning bed must be available for relaxation. A study has shown that the two workers are about three hundred times more sensitive to asbestos than rats. So Wolf is considering replacing his staff with rats as a health and safety precaution. Hamsters are meant to be even less sensitive to these toxins but it's simply not sustainable to keep having to readjust the height of the sales counter. Without animal testing, there is no future for Zandschow. Vynova Group employees plan to check on the rats next spring. The DjuDju Banana tastes like Maternus Gold without the banana. Mongozo Palmnut could easily be mistaken for a Perlenbacher Pilsner. And the Windhoek Lager shares a similar bitter freshness to Grafenwalder Strong. In addition to drinks, Wolf also sells everyday goods. Those who buy beer from him are allowed to go to Zanzibar for half an hour. The Cimarrons, who are no longer behind the counter, are now responsible for clearing the area on the coast.

Claasen borrows the Halo fish tank from Wolf, a storm has devastated railroad tracks and forests outside the aquarium, but in reverse order. Uprooted trees and farm slates on the tracks. Claasen labels little pieces of paper, folds them carefully, uses paper clips to greaten their ornamental worth, and places them on the bottom of the lottery drum. Three bull's-eyes, the rest zeroes. Once a railway line is accessible again, a train without passengers has to go through first before it can be reopened to actual commuters. Claasen found out the route that had been affected. He researched where it started and drove to the station at night in his car. His connections in the city are well known. He is friends with many officials and cleaners. Wolf himself, a rat and a man in enemy uniform spend their short vacation on a train between Oldenburg and Sande. The missing on-board restaurant is able to enjoy the scenery more than they can. The rat doesn't get why she entice Wolf with her waitress outfit between the compartments. The soldier stands at

the open carriage window and can't get out of his skin. He can no longer follow on the course of the river, which comes to a halt right next to the tracks. Slowing down. The track stops in slow motion. Sawdust drifts. In Rastede, something must have been hit on the tracks.

Night nurse Ines is at the Hospital Naval, dealing with victims run over by a deer in a cab on Calle del Torno. Broken bones, woodland debris dragged up to the entrance, damp twitching in the elevator. The role of the deer has been most coveted in Cartagena for years. Full of contempt, they are bent on revenge, have no points on their license in Flensburg yet, two years of practice crossing traffic islands and a good sense of orientation in bad weather.

Claasen spends the nights with the workers on the coast. Those who buy beer from Wolf are allowed to go to Zanzibar for half an hour with free Internet access. Wolf has everything he needs to get out of Zandschow. To get out of Zandschow, he stays in Zandschow. Monkeys on floating mats in the lagoon. And instead of a sunset, a few palm trees and are resting by the many salt lakes which define this continent. Whether the monkeys wheel me through the jungle. Whether my voice is being reworked in the case of an emergency. Whether there are words without substitutes. Whether we both know that sentimentality can't fix love. Whether my new life has only overwhelmed my old existence. Whether Silje is already asleep. Whether the world war is over on the ground floor. Whether Weißäuglein is passing out again. Whether life here is worthwhile. But everything in reverse order. But also whether Silje is already asleep.

A residue of warmth on the keyboard. The workers' settlement of ChemCoast is almost uninhabited. First industry, then housing for the workers, but in reverse order. Claasen is rarely there overnight. When he does stay, he goes back and then bolts his door from the inside with a plank. Sparse furnishings. Mattress. Table. Chair. Closet. Floor lamp. Exercise bike. The collar on the window handle. He prefers to spend the nights with the residents on the coast.

You were last online at three fourteen, at a time when even ships kneel, the tramlines pretend to pull containers into Wallachia, the truth is that containers are in fact half-truths, we admit lots and drink, guess mental states from a series of Youtube links, contact between joints is lost during the throw of a stone at a piece of metal on the site, shifting slightly as a result, you are still awake and destined to distinguish between the village and the universe, I stay on the screen until someone loves me.