

**We know we could, and fall in sync**  
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## **The Beginning, the Meadow**

One day, one year after Chernobyl, I was born in a meadow. I must have cried for a long time, and my voice was already dark at birth, I was told. My father built a three-room apartment on the meadow and my mother didn't insist on a bathtub. We placed the objects on blades of grass and moss, and the weather did the rest: all of them were bleached by the weather, especially those made of wood. The feet certainly rotted, but we didn't care. We did care, though, that the cooker came too late, it was December already, and only then could the milk, which didn't come from my mother, be heated in a little red pot. I liked it, and I grinned, and my father stuck a blade of grass in my toothless mouth, and my mother pressed the Polaroid button, and our three-room apartment in the park was finished.

Today I find the picture and pin it to the wood-chip wallpaper that my ex-husband painted in oxblood. Yes, he smeared it on the walls, it looks like an oxen slaughterhouse. I think that's one of the reasons we broke up. *Don't go into the bedroom*, he said to me once,

the Coca Cola was still full, minus a quarter of a glass still full. When I went into the room, there was the sheep that I still sleep with today. It was the warmest thing he ever gave me! It was on our fourth wedding anniversary, we'd got married as five-year-olds, and there was a pizza, we'd put candles in it, and when he blew it out, a drop of wax landed on a slice, and that's when I realised two things: salami pizza is the best and he was the man of my life.

Anyway, our three-room apartment was at its best in the summer, of course, because it was summer. I had my own room, which Hannelore Kohl, our neighbour, who moved in next door to us at that time with her fat husband, described as the most beautiful children's room she had ever seen. *No, no, no*, I cried, *the swing is missing, and I also want a sunrise on the wallpaper!*- *Paint*, my mother said, *it costs*, and my father nodded, and shortly afterwards he sawed down a walnut tree. And he had this circular saw going round and round loudly, and I remember I was supposed to call him in for dinner, my mother had made this meadow salad again out of meadow flowers and spinach, and I didn't want to, because I didn't want to,

because I was lazy, I waited and waited and waited. So I waited until there was a cry, probably from the tree with only one leaf, because that's where the sawing was happening. And I rushed to it, saw the swing, the present that I didn't know anything about, then the blood, blood everywhere, it looked like a human slaughterhouse. And it brought dinner to mind, one thumb here, the other there, one hand here, the other there, beautifully draped like chicken strips on lettuce. And suddenly I vomited violently into the still turning circular saw, which cut the vomit into tiny little chunks, and through the air they flew, onto trees, leaves and the grass and - I noticed it only then - also onto my father. Heavy as stones, they rained down on my father, who lay there motionless and - to this day I do not know - was he already dead at that moment?

There was no salad that evening, but there was a culprit, and that was me. I had my father on my conscience, and you know how heavy a father is. He weighed around three or four hundred kilos, you have to imagine that, he was so heavy that the meadow concaved into the earth and you can just imagine how much blood such a heavy man loses.

The fact that my father suffered from this disease led to a - shall I say - unbalanced situation in our family. You could do almost nothing with him where gravity had a bearing. My ex-husband once said that he was afraid of my coming of age because he was afraid of fat women and because my father, I had stupidly told him, on his eighteenth birthday, which he celebrated in the city where Erdoğan was once in prison, suddenly mutated, that is to say, from one second to the next, from a slim juvenile to an extremely fat adult. His mother, who was killed in his VW bus - but that's another tragic tale - told my mother in Turkish Kurdish that at that precise moment his fifteen shirt buttons burst open and one of the buttons flew directly into her ear. Imagine that! One's own boy becomes extremely fat within the blink of a second, and then the mother's ear is also rendered obsolete by her very own son! When my mother translated this to me in German, I cried and encircled her left earlobe with my child's mouth and sucked on it until I fell asleep. When I woke up again, seagulls were flying above my head and the Bosphorus was glittering below me, and it smelled, as always in Istanbul, of over-heated electrical appliances and aniseed.

## Five I

*How many more objects, how many more objects, how many more objects will be flung from the window?* we all shouted in chorus.

Early breasts grow, slower than the hair of our armpits, yes, but still, something is changing. We toast with cassis, because it's there and it's purple, and we spit chicken bones into the bucket, they go flying through the room. And Number Two had most again, although she has stilt legs, children's bodies, we are all of five, but there are never enough thighs, because they, we all agree, never mind, ... Anyway Number One dials zero-one-hundred-and-ninety - *Only two marks a minute!* - And moans onto a tape, and a real man on the other end moans back, *Ah, ah, ah*, he utters into my children's room. A man - voice only, no body - asks for her number, my number, because it's cheaper. *Sure*, says Number One, zero-six-eleven, and so on, hangs up, and it rings, and we giggle, laugh, try to be serious, and he asks: *How does your pussy smell?* Question marks in all the eyes, no one has a real pussy yet. *Uh, yeah, it is small.* - And

*tight*, he asks, *wet?* - *Yes, yes, yes*, moans Number One, all the others press their lips together. *It is swelling and swelling*, he moans, *swelling-penis*, whispers Number Four, A- in biology and a brother of thrusting age, sure she knows that. *I want to squeeze it right into your wet* -, and now Number Three sneezes, three times, as she always does in such situations, ever since her mother and the truck... Every class assignment she sneezes incessantly, anyway, I can't hold back any longer, and nor can Number Four, and we burst out laughing, truly just for a moment, and *Shhh!* Number One hisses, and the voice suddenly asks: *Can I speak to your mother?* - *Hahaha, that won't be possible, she's dead already*, I scream through the children's bedroom, *you'll have to call some other place for that*, shouts Number Three, and the moaning voice has long since become deadly serious, all he wants now is to speak to my mother. *Your mother!* We hang up, hang up very quickly, but a second later it rings again, and I do my early-thirties voice and answer it. *I know nothing about this, perhaps he has misdialled?* - *No, no, no*, he hasn't, and I quickly hang up, and Number One pulls the cable from the wall, and now we are bored. No, that's not true, we're scared, and what's the

best way to fight fear? A water fight, of course! So we go into the bathroom, and Number Two is in there. *Was she gone all this time? Have you been here the whole time?* Whatever! Get the hose from the hose bath, out it comes, and we splash each other, it is summer, hot, and all the drops of water fly through the afternoon air. *How does your pussy smell?*, Number One shouts and *Ah, ah, ah* and *Yes, yes, yes* we shout back in chorus, and meanwhile puddles seep through the floorboards and ejaculate together onto the ground floor. How wonderful to be blissfully unaware of all this.

And my mother, 25 to mid-thirties, bent over from her work as a late-bloomer, comes home, reaches the ground floor of the entrance, and steps into the middle of the puddle, computes, and worry lines become anger lines. Her mouth is swearing, salivating, snorting, screaming, and her legs make for the children's bedroom, and in a flash the bucket with the bones lands on my favourite rug. *No, my beautiful rug, no!* And the first thing that is flung out the window is the ghetto-blaster with the Spice Girls

*swing it*

*shake it*

*move it*

*make it*

*who do you think you are?*

*trust it*

*use it*

*prove it*

*groove it*

*show me how good you are*

growing fainter and fainter and gone. And the candles that I stole so carefully from Karstadt and our photo, the five of us on Fehmarn Island, proud and with braces, out it flies, and then the yellow Wonderbra and the tiger thong and my homework, the books, maths, biology, English, out they fly, the *Erlkönig* too, the lamp, my diary, my drawing, the bedside table, simply everything, she flings it out of the window, a fury, a fury, and we all scream in chorus: *How many objects, how many objects, how many more objects will be flung from the window?* But that's not enough for my late-blooming mother, I'm to be flung out, too. *No!*, everyone shouts, again in chorus, and they cling to my mother's legs, and I rush through to the hose-bathroom, but it is locked, occupied, and my mother limps on slowly, three whole girlfriends are hanging on to her from behind, it's like in a dream where

you want to run away but can't, for me and for my mother too, I think, and I break open the door with my BMI of 26, lock the door, *Phew, that was close*, and my mother, now she's hammering on it, *I'll get you yet, Specky!* Thwarted, she stomps off in a fury. And through the keyhole I see the cat flying out of the window now, it meows and is gone, and then I see my shelves, the desk, the wardrobe, the bed and the dog, it barks and bares its teeth, too, and out it flies in a high arc, and I can only hear its quiet whimper and then the screaming of the late bloomer: *Divorce kids, you!* and: *Out you fly, out!*, and I watch Number One fly out of the window once, and Number Three fly out three times, and Number Four I can't see at all anymore, and now the flush is pulled and the louvre door opens and behind it is the throne, the family toilet, and a warm smell of sweetness, chicken and the street rises to my nose, and Number Two - briefly I hear a scream, that must have been Number Four - is brushing her braces-teeth with my father's brush, *The Red One - forbidden!* And now we are quiet together. *You threw up?* Disgusting, but not uninteresting, and Number Two opens the door and goes out, my mother has also jumped out of the window in the meantime, and I am now quietly alone.

I sit on the rug, the sole survivor, BMI 21, and spit out chicken bones, they fly through the room, and around me are only chicken and fries, Twix and Nutella. Together we are five.

## Dede I

There's a six-foot-tall man standing in front of me, taking off his clothes. His voice is baritone and his body that of a Greek statue. His dog is a monster that yowls at me and is locked out. I suck his chalky cock and think of the site of Pamukkale. I think how my Dede is now in the ground and how neither of us ever understood what the other was saying. We sat next to each other and he burped: *Çok güzel*, and I just nodded, and he sucked on his pipe, and the smoke came back out of the hole in his throat. I cry and a tear drips onto the penis and rolls off. The statue moans darkly and comes all salty in my mouth, it tastes like the very old Beyaz Peynir sheep's cheese.

There was a clothes-line that ran all through the apartment. On it hung the old shirts of an old person who never drinks the water from the tap. *Bacteria and germs*, my mother explained to me early in the morning, yawning. And Dede took me to the bakery and bought me a Simit bagel because I had cried so much when my mother had

fallen asleep again. And because all the sesame seeds fell off my Simit, I cried all the more. We walked back hand in hand, and the muezzin bawled along with me. It was morning and already so hot that everything was shimmering. And Dede tried in vain to calm me down with his *Çok güzel*.

Something lying in the courtyard downstairs was stinking. The stench followed us into the apartment, it stank all the way into the kitchen, and I refused to eat the Simit. *Maybe it was because he was weak or sick, maybe it was a matter of territorial possession. Stray dogs do that. In these temperatures a corpse starts to stink very quickly.*

The baritone is snoring, I sneak into the bathroom, the dog follows me and growls. I quicken my pace, pull the door shut, he scratches at it and barks. I hear him howl, then sniff and pant, then suddenly it goes quiet.

Dede ate Simit and the sesame seeds fell out of the hole in his throat. He took a bag and grumbled: *Köpek ... plastik ... korkak ...* He shook his head and my mother started crying and I asked: *Why are you crying? And what*

*does that mean? What is Dede saying? - You can't translate that,* my father smacked his lips and drank a sip from the tap.

I throw up in the water and see little sperm floating in it. I throw an aspirin into the water and it foams up like mild red peppers when you fry them in butter, or like the eddies in the river we're walking along now. Dede throws a bag into the water, my parents are surprised at how quickly it sinks. Dede laughs, mucus flies out of the hole in his throat. It lands nowhere because we look away. I step over his dog, which is now lying in the hallway of the statue, and suddenly we are standing in front of the stall of a two-metre-tall trader, who is so loud that I hide behind Mum out of fear. We wait for Dad, who is haggling over new polo shirts, *which, as Mum says, are just fakes.* When we say goodbye I get a kiss and another Simit. Dede burps: *Seni seviyorum,* and Papa says what I should say in response. I repeat: *Ben de seni seviyorum,* and wave.

## Köfte

Sometimes a brown kitten visits us. It licks its paw on the ledge and turns its head now to the left, now to the right and to the left again. We want to stroke it, but it scurries away. Because I'm crying, because I want to keep it here, Mum and I are lying in wait. And when at last it starts raining in torrents, Mum quickly cuts up an Emmentaler and we wait for the kitten to bite. Hours later, it is sitting on the Persian rug, and Mum is blow-drying its fur. *There's always something needing done,* she laughs, and she dries its tail as well.

The cat comes more often, and soon she is ours. We call her Köfte.

One time Dad is welding an object outside so noisily that I cover Köfte's ears. Because she doesn't like that, she scratches five stripes of punishment on my arms. So I put her in the washing drum and waded in from outside, singing loudly, *Now I'm going to wash you!* I imitated the washing machine and made the beeping noises myself. *Meow,*

says Köfte, *meow*. After I've buzzed my way through the spin cycle, Köfte's washing is over. *All right, let's stop the game now, you're brown and you'll always be brown*. Köfte meows, but the door won't open. There are buttons and discs, numbers and circles all over the place. *Only a mother understands an appliance like this*, Dad once said dropping his work clothes in front of the drum.

I pull at the door, I tug at the plastic, I knock on the glass of the window, but it will not open. *Meow*, goes Köfte, *meow*. *Oxygen, I think, is there any air in there at all?* and I run to my father with an enormous, oversized portion of fear. He's standing there as he does every morning, in full gear, and shakes his head, which today is in a welder's helmet. So I run back to the kitchen and look into the drum. *Meow*, goes Köfte, *meow*.

*Only in an emergency*, Mum said in the morning, because it's her first day at the clinic, so I dial the number two. *Meow*, goes Köfte, *meow*. On the phone, a woman asks a woman who asks a woman who asks a woman where Mum is. When Mama finally answers, she turns all red at the other end of the line, I know it, because her

shame or rage rushes through the cable, and our receiver, which was beige until then, turns a furious red.

*Meow*, goes Köfte, *meow*. I talk to her through the glass for ages, and when Mum finally comes home, she is ten years older all of a sudden. I don't like that at all, because we have this competition in kindergarten. *Whoever has the youngest mother wins!* Of course, I can forget about first place now. While Mum taps a button and the machine door pops open reproachfully, as if it had been waiting all this time for nothing more than a competent button pusher, I look at Mum's face where the skin is now hanging laxly. Köfte leaps out and Mum laughs in relief, furrows running lengthwise down her cheeks.

Now Köfte is sitting on the examination chair, which is my children's chair. Mum taps her paws for reflexes, she listens to the rest of Köfte. But she only really looks properly in her ears, and she should check everything. *It's all right*, but I don't believe her after the half-hearted examination which was hardly fulsome. So I take the precaution of lifting Köfte's tail and sticking my finger in her bottom. Köfte squeals and slips out of my hands like soap.

She's been gone for days now. Every day I wait in the meadow and call out: *Köfte*. Then, on a morning when the dew finally tickles, Mum comes home with the big shopping, because from today her work at the veterinary clinic is over again. *No wonder*, I think, after all I witnessed Köfte's superficial disease analysis at first hand, and perhaps she should *rather turn her attention to inanimate objects*.

Nevertheless, I am of course pleased with her, because she has brought a chunk of cheese. Immediately we cut it into microscopic pieces, ruefully I say *sorry* to the missing Köfte, and then we throw cubes of cheese into the grass. A mere five minutes later, Dad finds one of them. As he pops it through the opening of the welding helmet, I repeat the word *sorry*, but this time phrased as a question laced with reproach.

Now Köfte is sitting back on the table again and purring. Her Lenor fur is puffed up, but her paws are now black - what a strange animal. *I'll take care of the dirty paws tomorrow*, I think: *Mum is right, it is really the case that there is always something needing done*.

## Light evening meal

We are having a kebab, grandma and grandpa are visiting, you have to get to know each other's culture sometime. I'm eight and wear very loose clothes, but you can guess what's growing underneath. And Dad orders everything twice, plus chips, because he knows that his newly divorced favourite daughter loves them. Lamb with sultanas and platters of vegetables and ice-cold cacık and steaming semolina. *Foreigners have made a real effort in our country these last decades*, Grandma says, sliding back and forth on her chair in a funny way. She only tells us that she has to go to the toilet when granddad has bitten into the last baklava. And now Mum is embarrassing, how great everything is, *vegetables, that no one here knows. Okra, for example, or do you know them, Mami?* Grandma thinks they're slimy, end of story. Granddad wants to know how business is going, my mother just says quickly: *Needs must, needs must*. I roll my eyes and chew my chips, adding more mayo. Grandpa says quietly to me that I should be careful with my figure, while the others argue about who is going to pay. That the little

fatty breasts were just a start, that, unlike me, the fat really likes to move: to the stomach, the legs, the buttocks. That I should follow my grandmother's example, she just cuts food into little bits, *and look how slim she still is!*

I put the chips back, we look at each other for a long time. Suddenly I see him ringing the doorbell wildly, I see him swearing at Dad, I see the Christmas tree landing on him, I see him as a boy with shorn hair, I see him shaving a moustache, I see him trudging through the snow, I see him cramping up under the icy shower, I see him impregnating Grandma, I see him crying in a corner, I see him cramming and passing the university exams, I see him torturing little kittens, I see him shooting a deer, I see him with Mum over his knee, I see him with the four other sisters over his knee, I see him taking a shit, I see him ripping up a poster of The Beatles, I see him wanking, I see him hiccupping after a few shots, I see him building a bird house with me and stealing ten eggs from the neighbour when he was a boy, I see him nursing an ancient woman and then sawing the deer in half. And then suddenly I see the fries taking off from my plate, I see them seeking each other and finding each other, how

they intertwine in the air, how they are now one and how this one now crashes onto his skull with the concentrated force of a calorie bomb. *Ouch!* cries the nutritional expert, *what on earth do you think you're doing?!* and he looks helplessly around the kebab shop, because I'm the only one still sitting at the table. The rest of the family is standing in front of the illuminated signs, where Mum is proudly explaining how the different dishes taste. Only Dad looks over briefly, and observes what is happening between the generations. I run to him and hide myself well, because the violent fantasy of a grandfather can sometimes turn into the real thing. *We are leaving,* he yells at his wife, and she shouts back that she'll be the one to decide that. That the fatty food is messing with his stomach which was why he was forced to suggest they leave immediately. *Olive oil is healthy,* Dad corrects. That his body is is hardly an indicator for the healthy qualities of olive oil. What was he insinuating, Dad asks, rebelliously, whereupon Mum orders *Dört Rakı* and hisses *Enough!* and Dad looks at the whole family and then disappears outside, into a country that, as he realises anew every day, does not like him at all.

## **The End of the Meadow**

The days after Dad's death are cold. In the evening we call *good night, good night*, but we can hardly hear each other, so loud is the rain, it echoes through the room. We always have the windows open, even on the most Arctic night the window remain at *half past seven*, that's what my mother calls it when the windows are tilted. *Why*, Dad and I asked every day until the day before yesterday, *do we always have to leave all the windows open? We'll freeze to death here!* She'd just say, *Because of the Beatles, the Beatles*, and we'd say, *Yes, we've got that, but we haven't understood it*, whereupon she'd just run to the windows again and tilt them one by one.

So now, while I lie in my room, my mother lies in hers under a cover that has kept two warm until today, but my father is no longer lying next to her, instead under the earth at the end of the meadow on a small mountain with his head facing south-east. I imagine worms crawling into his mouth, spiders weaving webs in his armpits, the linen sheet soaking itself full of rain and dirt. I imagine the moles examining him and the roots are reaching out to him, clinging to him, embracing him.

An hour or two after his death, my mother switched off the circular saw and called somewhere or other. Shortly afterwards, a man had come and cordoned off the meadow in a generous fashion. Then a doctor came and pronounced him dead. Then another man came to take his picture. No sooner had he taken my father's picture than another man arrived and put up strange signs. Then another man had come and his job seemingly was to wade through the grass, and there was another who stood on his stomach. After that, another man with a camera had come, but he was chased away by a man who had got out of a car at the same moment. Then another man in an astronaut suit had come and then another man who started talking to the man who had got out of the car and was bending over my father in the meantime. Then another man had come who also bent over my father. Then another man had come, who looked up at the sky, and waved my mother over, but she just shook her head. Then another man had come, shooing away all those present.

The last man began to undress my father, to talk to him, sometimes chanting, sometimes asking him something, his voice breaking towards the end of the question and sounding like a muezzin with bronchitis. At regular

intervals, he brought up bronchial mucus and spat it right onto the bed that my father had freshly planted only a few weeks ago. Twice the mucus landed behind him on the porch and once on the railings. Once it landed on the outside table, once in the ashtray, twice on Thursday's newspaper, once on the chair my father had carved himself, once on the *ud* that had always leaned against the railing and which he had never played. But sometimes it landed in front of it, still on the grass, the slime, it hit a red rose once and then dripped on a squirrel looking for nuts under its calyx, it hit a yellow generator, the snout of the VW bus, an ant and a lemon butterfly, it hit many things, including Hannelore, and this was the first time in ages that she had left the house. Of course, this particularly annoyed her, which I could well understand. *How can this even be possible, she had grumbled, I lock myself up for years, and then I come up once to see what's going on in the world outside for a moment, I summon all my courage, you know what that means for me, Madam Neighbour, and then not only is this shitty sun in the sky, but there's this guy spitting at me as well.* My mother kept shaking her head. *What has actually happened here?* Hannelore asked again, and because my

mother still didn't respond, she ran back down the stairs to the cellar. Full of hope, she would wait there for her husband in the evening to persuade him not to move to the capital, which wasn't to be one for long.

When all the blood had finally been washed off - in some places it also had to be scraped off with a small spatula - the man stubbed out his cigarette, and that's the moment I saw my father naked for the first time. He had a scar on his groin, where did it come from? He had never mentioned it. And the pubic hair, which didn't match his black hair at all, although no longer supplied with any vital juices, was still curling happily and red.

\*

The ablution took hours. *They should have used the garden hose*, my mother said. She knew the dimensions of his body only too well, and efficiency had always been one of her virtues. She had learned it, my psychologist would later say, first through beatings, then obedience, and finally this effectiveness, which her father also called *loss of poverty*, took on a life of its own, until that day when

she lost something huge and could do nothing about it except -

My mother stalked around the apartment thinking aloud what she was going to do with all her husband's belongings, how many more square metres she now had in our apartment and that she could finally cook something with calories. When she threw the cordless screwdriver into the bin, I shouted: *You can't talk about my father like that now, he's still lying there!* - *That, that is no longer your father,* she shouted back, *what is lying there is a cylindrical body wrapped in linen. Of course I can!* And I shouted something else too, but by then she had already gone into the cellar. And now I could hear her cursing and the rustling of moving boxes that would soon become the grave of his belongings.

Those are the days the meadow starts to die, too. All the little flowers droop their heads, then they drop off, the small bees fly away, and the other animals move to lush ground, for ours has become sad and dry.

And those are the days that no new tips appear either. And gradually the need to control things drops away.

Slips of the pen happen without consequences, sentences are simply left written wrongly. You steal pens and from supermarkets and show off your spoils proudly. You leave the prison at night and come to breakfast in the morning with a lie, stretching as if you were well rested. You stick your nose in the fridge and pull it out again. You call old men. You imitate trends and pluck your brows matchstick-thin. You stop eating and dream of French fries. You walk around in the meadow before sunrise, so as not to be at the grave after sunset. You write down things you miss. You file a missing person's report:

*Since my father's death, I have been dreadfully missing field-widow flower, true valerian and comfrey, wild marjoram, scented violet, common ivy and Persian speedwell, true marsh mallow, four-leaved dewberry, verbena and strawberry, seed asparagus, common lamb's lettuce and pigweed, white stonecrop, creeping cinquefoil, scabious and meadow bluebells, good old lady's mantle, spring knotweed, daisies, field thistle, thistle as vegetable and rough goose thistle, goose cinquefoil, maple-leaved goosefoot, white goosefoot, common goutweed, common loosestrife and spotted*

loosestrife, meadow bell flowers, Canadian goldenrod, common ragwort, common groundsel, creeping bugleweed and tiny hawkweed, but also wood hawkweed, common buttercup, wood lettuce, hazel root, field bindweed and, of course, the lovely autumn dandelion, meadow saffron, raspberries, common shepherd's purse, variegated, yellow and common hemp, true and false hops, common horn clover, coltsfoot and field chamomile, St. John's wort, chamomile, wild cardoon, corn poppy, white clover, meadow clover, large burdock, small burdock, garlic weed, hairy button wrinkle-wort, dock, mild and snake's knotweed, large-flowered, small-flowered and mealy mullein, but black mullein also sorely missed. Cornflower, creeping bramble, field, common and creeping thistle, field cress, arrow cress, creeping quack grass, variegated crown vetch, campion, lantern flower, prickly lettuce, rocamboles, common liverwort, true toadflax, common larkspur, common dandelion, spotted lungwort, lily of the valley, musk mallow, rose mallow, wild mallow, meadowsweet, meadow daisy, milk thistle, wall lettuce, common horseradish, spreading orach, ... - Please stop, finally, please stop, my mother cries. At dinner we look at each other and

remain silent while the plates of canned Mexican-style stew suffuse our bodies with an uncomfortable heat.

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When the meadow had died off, rollers had brought steaming tarmac. Now cars park on it and people walk past here and there as if it were the most normal thing in the world. We used to have the meadow to ourselves, only inviting the neighbours to birthdays, for which Hannelore always baked gigantic cheesecakes.

Because I was right, because my father is everywhere here, we are moving. Because you can paint over the walls in our meadow apartment as often as you like, in the evening you look at the wall and there you can see him. Or you stand in the kitchen of the meadow apartment, want to get something to drink, and you can see him. Or you go into the bathroom of the meadow apartment without a bath, brush your teeth, and you see his red toothbrush, even though it has long since been thrown away, like everything else.

We heave most objects out of the window together. Downstairs they are strewn around on the street, so we

push them up against the wall of the building, go back into the apartment and throw the next objects out of the window. This way we empty our entire three-room apartment in no time, or get help from a firm. Afterwards we pat each other on the back, which is funny, we haven't touched each other for a long time.

## **The Heaven Meadow**

Everything is upside down. The trees, for example. Brown above and green below. And the squirrels hang upside down from them. Beetles crawl through clouds, and the lanterns at the edges of the fields shine from the ground upwards, it all makes no sense. Birds have fallen out of the sky and are flapping their wings on the tarmac. Cars are asleep on their backs and their tyres are still spinning, no idea where they were going. My milk has also taken a stupid tumble and it is flowing upwards into the sky, which is now green, because heaven has become a meadow.

## No. 51

Once in October I rowed through Brandenburg with a Georgian and slept with him on an island so small that his feet briefly dipped into the water with every movement of a wave, whereupon he always cried out, because the water was very cold then, and then he scolded me in Georgian, and I asked: *What?*, and he answered in Georgian, and I asked again: *What?*, and he answered again in Georgian, which I again didn't understand. This repeated itself countless times, and it annoyed me so much, that I just swam away, and he hadn't even come.

## Five II

We get up, brush our teeth, and Number Four explains how to shave one's legs: *Pull the blade upwards in small jerky movements, not all in one go, otherwise some hairs will remain, and you really can't expect a guy to cope with hair.* We imitate the process, and immediately Number Two cuts a slice off herself. *Toilet paper!*, we scream and tend to the bleeding knee.

We get dressed. Short skirts with flowers, tops without sleeves, bras without breasts. We start walking. We wait for buses and spit on the windows. We yank on satchels, push fifth graders around. We go to the first lesson, copy from others, we have no idea what the pluperfect is. We adore Toni, we all love him, we know he will soon belong to Number Two. We think: *What do we have to do to become like her? We can't go blonde, no, but we can lose weight!* - and we throw the sandwiches in the bin. Second lesson. We write notes. Today we bitch about Number Two. We think she looks ugly, very skinny, a bean-pole. We think her clothes are awful. We think it's her turn today. So we draw her as a hangman, five letters, and guess that the word is *hunger*. We go out at break-

time, our stomachs growl, we buy cocoa with a straw and Twix. We won't talk to Number Two until she finally stops looking so good. *We won't talk to you again until you get fatter*, we shout. Then we realise that hunger has six letters.

We skip third period and go to McDonald's. We buy burgers and share them. We go to the movies, we get our period, I cry and call my mother. We stuff paper into childish knickers, we go to Karstadt and steal tampons. We get caught and put in the room where serious criminals are kept. We are interrogated, threatened with prison, we cry and say: *we are so sorry*. They let us blub for another hour, then we believe they believe us, then we finally leave. They had opened the package beforehand and fished out four tampons. They had rolled over the interrogation table, we grabbed them and hid them in our fists.

We are free again and run through the streets, past shops that shine as brightly as we do. We are glowing, we sing, the pedestrian zone is universe enough for us. We giggle, we laugh, we scream with happiness. We kick at full dustbins until they give up and fall down. We take a single bite of our Big Macs and then give them to a tramp

who is happy and turns around and gobbles them all up. We throw the paper bag with the soggy fries still in it at him. We go into the shop where beads are kept in hundreds of little bowls. We try out the beads and confer among us and put the beads in the third girl's hat. She got it from her Mum, three days before the truck - but never mind. Anyway, we put the beads in there and sometimes they rub against each other and clink, then we cough quickly so they can't be heard. We leave the shop and clap our hands and stretch them up to the sky that exists only for us.

Because of our new bead necklaces, we have also successfully missed the fourth lesson, so we don't open our exercise books again until the fifth. We write numbers and draw graphs, we argue on pieces of paper about who Toni will belong to from the weekend onwards. We skip the sixth lesson, run out of school and get caught right at the gate. *Whatever*, we shout: *Fuck you!* and run away. We knew calls would be incoming on machines at home, but our parents wouldn't be home anyway, and if they were, we would destroy or tamper with all the answering machines so we'd never get caught.

Again, we pour cassis because it's there and it's purple, and disguise ourselves as young and old, poor and rich. We make up surveys and interview passers-by. We stop a mother and her daughter. Both are crying, neither wants to talk, both want to be left alone, please. We call these sad people names and shout that it is all their fault if democracy dies altogether. We see a cat chasing a squirrel. We sit in the park and watch the naked man who jumps into the far too shallow pool every day. As always, he will dive, as always, it is a belly flop, as always, he will jump into the water lilies, after which reeds will hang from his willy. We clap and shout: *Pondweed willy!*, then we smoke fags and cough.

Of course we left Number Two back at school, all woeful at missing out on our Tuesday.

Everyone dies of something. We imagine that somewhere it is written what we will die of. We wonder if it's in a folder that belongs to the dead. Or to politics. But because we don't believe in politics, and we stopped talking to the dead a long time ago, as we swore to on Fehmarn Island, we write up a checklist for the question: *What will you die of? 1. cancer, 2. car accident, 3.*

heart, 4. Being thrown out of, or jumping from, a window,  
5. Some other accident. Choose from 1 to 5. And out we go  
to interview people.

**[End of Sample]**