



Tim Staffel: »Berlin Südstern«

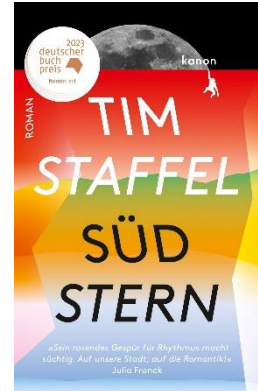
Excerpt translated from the German by Lucy Jones

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Content BERLIN SÜDSTERN



Welcome to Breaking Bad in Berlin. Vanessa deals in uppers, Deniz patrols his beat. When they meet, Berlin's heavens open. A major work of urban fiction in the tradition of Alfred Döblin's Berlin, Alexanderplatz and Rio Reiser's love songs. Vanessa is a pharmacologist. She delivers drugs that maintain her clients' happiness and success – doctors, athletes and politicians. Deniz is a police officer who patrols his beat in Kreuzberg. He does double shifts while also caring for his father. Every day, Vanessa and Deniz come across the lost and the lonely, until one day, they meet. A tender, stirring social novel that asks: How do we survive the pressure? How do we want to live our lives and how can we love?

Biography Tim Staffel

Tim Staffel has published four novels. His debut Terrordrom was adapted to the stage by Frank Castorf at the Volksbühne in 1998. Staffel has also written numerous radio plays. He has been awarded the Alfred Döblin Scholarship and the Literature Scholarship from the German Literature Fund several times. His latest novel "Südstern" has been nominated for the longlist of the Deutscher Buchpreis 2023.



(Foto: © Ken Yamamoto)



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My name's Vanessa and I'm an angel. Everyone around here is waiting for something to happen. I dim the lights. At the round table near the doorway to the smoker's room sits a couple. They aren't a couple yet – that'll happen tomorrow. She's drinking vodka and bitter lemon through a straw; he throws the straw away. She wants children; he's not even given it a thought yet. A group of five are sitting at the corner table near the big window that looks out onto the beer benches I chained up at eleven. After eleven, we don't serve outside, otherwise the dogs locked out on the balconies start howling and won't stop. The group of five meet regularly, in a different place each time. None of them is from here; they all came to the city separately ten years ago, got to know each other and moved into a flat together. Once a month, they raise a glass to the fact that they're still in touch even though they now live separate lives. They've drifted much further apart than they'd like to admit and so they drink quickly and copiously, to create a feeling of closeness. I stack bottles in the fridge which is taller than me. I slice lemon and shovel crushed ice into glasses. The young man sitting in front of me is fond of poetry – Rimbaud is his favourite. He really wants to go home and watch a couple of episodes of *The Big Bang Theory*, then fall asleep. But he can't tell his friend this, who's gone to the toilet. His friend wants to party and has never heard of Rimbaud. They're both studying, just not the same thing.

I go into the smokers' room and empty the ashtrays. Just a woman and her boyfriend are sitting there. A couple of weeks ago, she turned down his offer of marriage. She sits, smoking and thinking about why she doesn't sing anymore. Her boyfriend is a stonemason; he's wearing the dark blue silk shirt that he only puts on when they're out together. She'd



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love to dance swing but he has two left feet. Her aubergine lipstick leaves a mark on her cigarette filter. His hearing isn't very good but she talks quietly anyway. She wants to turn her life around and no longer live off her father's money, who can't stop worrying about her. Her boyfriend doesn't mind. She wants to help people, he doesn't know how to help her. He wants cigarettes but the pack in her handbag is empty. I bring him some and he asks, How did you know? Rimbaud's friend has come back and is sitting next to him again. In a moment he'll ask, Where shall we go? The textured wallpaper has been on these walls for eternity. The roses on it used to bloom but now they've faded and their heads hang. I'm ready for last orders but it's still too early.

Outside blue police lights flash up and down Wrangel Strasse. Inside the candles in the chandelier flicker too but they're fake, powered by electricity, and only the crystals that glitter and sparkle are real. It's an enormous chandelier, our pride and joy. The ceiling can hold it despite how heavy it is; just some olive-green paint is flaking off, leaving behind a random pattern, the cartography of a foreign country.

In a booth near the entrance, a man is scribbling in his notebook. When he gets home, he'll try to decipher what he's written. Often dreams, which he tries to shape into stories that turn into daydreams. Night after night he drinks one beer after the other and writes in little lined notepads. He hasn't told anyone about them, just stashes them away at home in a place where no one will ever see them.

The door opens and someone saunters in wanting to change money. He's just passing through, he's from Poland and doesn't yet know where his journey will take him. His girlfriend, whom he's just met, is waiting outside; she doesn't want to go. Last orders, I say



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and play the throwing-out song. The bottles behind me stand in a row in front of the mirror, brightly coloured, reflecting the light from lamps hidden under a ledge above the counter. Beer foams from the taps and I skim it off.

Fritz looks over at me, wagging his head. He's definitely a Fritz. He's sitting on a stool at the bar and there are two empty seats between him and Rimbaud. Fritz is sizing up the two lads and in a minute, he'll go over and start talking to them. The group of regulars is breaking up. One of the women is dreaming about India but she's afraid of flying; the other has handed in her notice and doesn't know what she's going to do now. She pays for everyone's drinks. She doesn't know it yet but in two weeks, she'll be interviewed by Amazon. They'll want to take her on but won't offer her the salary she expects. The two men in the group will say that she won't get much more elsewhere but she'll turn the job down anyway and shortly afterwards regret her decision. Tonight's drinks cost 150 euros. She does some sums in her head and any minute she'll say 155; I count the seconds. 155, she says. I smile and say thank you, in my practised way.

Fritz is still wagging his head, rapidly scrolling lines on an invisible screen. I speak to him, say, Hello Fritz. I just can't help it. I tell him he should turn off his screens now and then. He immediately freezes and can't work out how I know his name. My first thought is that he has a wife and child, yes, I think, but they live elsewhere. Then I realise that Fritz lives by himself and has done so for forty-nine years. Rimbaud and his friend can't make a decision; Rimbaud orders a gin and tonic and his friend, a wheat beer. I roll the bottle back and forth between my palms. In a minute, Fritz won't be able to contain himself; he'll ask the lads if they have some weed. Rimbaud's friend has some but he'll keep that to himself. Fritz



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works for IBM and can't sleep. Cameras on his computer operate like an attendance clock, keeping an eye on him and his work, making sure he says his ten Hail IBMs. The whole day long, Fritz solves problems on his computer then can't switch off, can't calm down without help and that's why he wants some weed, to chill out. Rimbaud knocks back his gin and tonic. Fritz should try to relax with a drink. Rimbaud would like to go home with me, but he doesn't dare ask. His friend wants to know where they're going now. Fritz wants to sleep. The guy in the booth is still scribbling in his notebook. He watches Rimbaud and imagines he is a prince.

I can't bring myself to turn up the lights, end this scene and throw everyone out. Outside, quicksand awaits these people whereas here, they still have something invisible to hold onto for a moment longer. The couple in the smokers' room hasn't been able to decide which kind of dance they're going to, but tomorrow they will. The music stops when I switch off the hi-fi.

Fritz isn't having an easy time. Rimbaud and his friend have left him sitting there. Rimbaud will follow his friend and they'll carry on drinking and paying entrance to clubs. His friend will have a laugh with people he's never met before; Rimbaud will not say anything, smile and dream.

I rinse glasses and turn the lights out. Fritz has no idea that it's his lucky night. Wait, I tell him, stay there. I have a nice batch of Indica for him. Fritz gives a wide smile. Have a nice evening, I say, and he will. I lock the door to the bar, draw the curtains, and leave by the rear exit across the courtyard. It's conspicuously quiet on Schlesisches Tor, no one seems to be in a hurry and the traffic isn't moving. Everyone pauses for a minute's silence, each thinking of something else.



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Up on the platform of the city train, faces are lit in neon light and exhaustion is stamped on each one, but no one will admit it. A woman stands opposite me on the train, very young; first, she fixes her gaze on the floor, then she looks straight ahead, through everything, through everyone. The world on a screen before her is blurred and she doesn't know what she should do. Studying would be a good idea, she thinks, but she doesn't know what. Her friends are studying music, film, acting and cultural studies and she wants to do something like that too, but only perhaps, and perhaps it's better not to. She's weighing up whether she should enrol on a course in the care industry, possibly nursing. She could try it out with an internship. But she'd much rather travel to Italy with the others. She still lives at home and can't just go travelling without knowing what she's going to do later. She's worried that she can't keep working forever in the cloakroom of the State Opera, earning pocket money two days a week, taking people's coats and bags, and that's why she dyed her hair this morning – to make something happen, to make a difference. Her hair is now black and platinum blonde and she's powdered her pale skin white. Her army green Parka is new, she ordered it online and kept it. She's painted her lips dark red, and lined them black, but standing here alone on the city train, she feels just like she always does. Except that now, in the middle of the night, the feeling grows and grows until it's bigger than she is. Everyone is on their way home; only she's on her way back to her parents' house in Charlottenburg. Everyone thinks she's boring because she talks without saying anything. I'm going to sit down, she says, when she sits down. I think I'm going to eat an apple, she says, before eating an apple. She only says what's she about to do, and that's not a lot. She can't put into words how she feels and that's why she's sad, especially tonight, because no one said she looked nice or that her new look suits her.



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I get off at Möckernbrücke. Four people are squatting on two sleeping bags on the overpass to the U7: one of them is peeling an orange, two with reddened eyes are swiping across the displays of their mobiles, and the fourth is playing the violin with an empty cardboard cup set in front of him. The tower with the post office horn on top, completely hollowed out, soars the night sky like a monolith. The flats they wanted to build here are still only sketches on paper. The sign above the theatre is empty. Across from us on Grossbeeren Strasse, Cüneyt's Kiosk is still open, with its video game den downstairs. Cüneyt plays games with friends who don't have to pay. Cüneyt needs more customers. I think for a moment about sitting down and having a beer with them, watching the game on the curved screen, but I stay where I am on my side of the street.

A stranded e-scooter lies across our entrance, the red light on its handlebars blinking, an emergency call heard by no one. I unlock the door and climb the stairs, floorboards creaking underfoot. On the third floor, there's a shoe rack outside one of the two doors that contains only left shoes without laces. On the landing between floors three and four, someone has been smoking in front of the stained glass window that can't be opened. We live on the fifth floor under the sky. Perhaps he'll already be asleep, I'd like that. Perhaps I'll push open the door and find the flat in darkness. I'll creep into my room, open the window, hear the city train across the canal, and stare at the stars – sometimes a few at least are visible. Perhaps Cüneyt will be down in front of his shop, laughing with his friends. But when I turn the key in the lock, all the lights are on. My boyfriend has stayed up for me. He stops the stars from being visible, lying on the sofa with his computer. All this is his. Actually, I like it when he waits up for me no matter how late it gets. He's tired. I wanted to see you, he says. I know.



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There's something on his mind, something he can't talk about, at least not with me, because I'm not bound to confidentiality. He'll apologise in a minute for being stressed – he's the cause of the stress, every time. I never thought I'd live with a man. I look at him every day afresh and ask myself if he's the one for me. So far, the answer's been the same every day. I like his honest face, his eyes and his laugh although it's loud, but then again he laughs too rarely. He has nice arms and a firm stomach; he waits up for me to come home in the middle of the night. You smell like a bar, he says. That's because I work in one. He likes to say he doesn't understand me. I don't care but he doesn't know that. Perhaps I'd smell differently if I were his wife but Olli doesn't believe in tying the knot and that's why he doesn't ask. I don't ask either; I'd rather kiss him. Should he enrol me on an MA, he wants to know, because he can't stop going on about it. I've never wanted to do an MA. Hmm, Olli says. Hmm, goes my boyfriend when he's not happy about something but doesn't want to talk about it. Let's fuck, I suggest. He hesitates for a moment. In a minute he'll say, Your place or mine, and then we'll go to his.

The next morning, my boyfriend squeezes oranges in his vest. He's in a bad mood because he's fed up and the same record is playing over and over again in his head. I miss the sound of rustling newspapers. People only ever look for ways to harm others, thinks my boyfriend, the MP Oliver Lompe. I ask if he wants toast even though I know the answer. He's pouring juice into our glasses from the carafe his mother gave us. Olli bought the juicer himself. He likes waking up next to me. He thinks one bedroom is enough for the two of us.



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He has one bedroom, I have the other and we share the living room and kitchen where we have breakfast together. We even have a balcony in Olli's room. I'm allowed to use it too. I like things the way they are. My boyfriend goes to brush his teeth and four minutes later, he gives me a goodbye kiss. Take care, my angel, he says. Yes, you too.

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My name's Deniz Aziz. I'm a policeman. My colleague Jovanna Coric and I have received a callout to Bürkner Strasse. It's part of our beat. Section 52, Kreuzberg south. Jovanna wants me to let her drive. She can forget it. I'm in charge of our patrol team. Jovanna says I don't have to be her partner if I don't want to. But no one else wants to. I can have myself transferred to another section, says Ms Coric. Then do it. But it's not as easy as that, she says. Yeah, no kidding. I double park the car. We ring Ömür's bell. Have to use the stairs. By the second floor, Jovanna starts panting but we have to go up to the fourth. I arrive an hour earlier than she does. No idea how Ms. Coric passed the aptitude test. Our people are desperate. They'll take anyone who can manage three push-ups.

A man in felt slippers opens the door just a crack. His slippers are checked. The man is in his late forties, perhaps a couple of years younger. He must have been to the hairdresser's recently – the edges of his trimmed full beard look as if they've been drawn with a ruler. Mr Ömür? Jovanna asks, leaning against the doorframe with one hand. Do you understand me?



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She talks far too loudly. Yes, of course, he says and looks at me as if asking for help. He doesn't know what to make of her question. I can't very well explain my colleague's peculiarities to him. She checks that he's the person who called to report a breach of the peace. Then she explains to him that we have to enter his flat to find the source of the noise. Mr Ömür doesn't understand. He opens the door a tiny crack wider, filling it with his thin body. He's barely taller than Jovanna and is wearing a cardigan with a cable stitch pattern. Can't we hear the noise? Oh yes. Sounds like a buzz saw. And techno music. It's just after eight in the evening. Jovanna tries to enter the flat to hear the noise that's bothering him. Mr Ömür wants to know if that's really necessary. Yes, says Frau Coric, it's a routine procedure. Mr Ömür asks her to take her shoes off. Jovanna refuses because she's on duty. Mr Ömür finds this strange. Türkmüsün? he asks. I keep out of it. Jovanna says even louder that she's not Turkish. Mr Ömür still insists that she takes her shoes off. She can't, she says, for self-protection. She emphasises every syllable like he's retarded. A woman with carrier bags comes up the stairs and nods at us. Or at Mr Ömür. He ignores her. She lives opposite and quickly disappears into her flat. She turns the key twice in the lock, then we hear the safety bolt sliding into place. You can't come into my flat with shoes on, says Mr Ömür. Then we can't take any measures against a breach of the peace, says Jovanna. It sounds like a threat. Mr Ömür looks quizzically at me. İyi akşamlar, Ömür Bey, nasılsınız, I say and pull off my shoes. Jovanna freaks out. Would I please put my shoes back on again? Mr Ömür stands back and asks me in, içeri buyrun. Teşekkür ederim, thank you. I tell Jovanna that I'll be back in a second. Mr Ömür closes the door behind us. I hear Jovanna yelling, Deniz! Ömür bey is alone in his flat, just a cat brushes against his legs. The bass thumps through the walls in the living room. The saw screeches relentlessly. Must be coming from the neighbouring side building.



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Mr Ömür picks up his cat. I'll see what I can do, I say. I don't say that I won't do anything.

Mr Ömür thanks me and accompanies me to the door.

Jovanna is waiting downstairs, sucking a sweet. I get into the car. Jovanna puts on her seatbelt and says I put myself in danger. It was against regulations to go in there without shoes on. I made her look ridiculous, she said. Yes, exactly. She doesn't have a problem with me being Turkish, she claims. Happy to hear it. Her grandparents are from Croatia, they never wanted to stay. Well, then. I'm in the car with a madwoman, and now we're driving down Hobrecht Strasse. Ms Coric doesn't want to talk to me about religion. Lucky me. She tolerates my views but doesn't want to discuss them with me. What *are* my views? I ask her. Let's just not talk about it, she says and unwraps the next chocolate sweet. Sticks it in her mouth and starts sucking on it noisily. Tosses the plastic wrapper onto the glove box and complains that everyone thinks she's a Muslim. She doesn't get it. It gets on her nerves. I want to know if she sometimes just shuts up. She doesn't understand what I mean. I've had enough and call Baba, want to hear how he's doing. I'm perfectly all right, he says. His voice sounds more or less normal, so I believe him. I don't have much choice. Jovanna tells me that private calls are not allowed on duty. I force myself to remain calm and keep my opinions to myself. It's going to be a long shift.

At two in the morning, we have to drive over to Columbiadamm and take over from colleagues doing a vehicle spot check. I report to the police headquarters that 2-0-5 is now on duty here. It's drizzling. Jovanna tugs at her fluorescent vest and waves her traffic paddle about. It's one of those moments when I wonder why I do this job. Because it's the only one I have. Because Baba and I wouldn't get by without it. Because I've always wanted to do it.



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Jovanna waves a car down that is driving suspiciously far to the left. Perhaps he's a phantom driver. I let her get on with it, she wants to breathalyse him. But he doesn't want to. It's voluntary, she says to him. All he has to do is agree, take a breathalyser test, let her check his pupils and that's it. But she doesn't get any further. He doesn't want her to look in his eyes. It starts raining harder. Jovanna says that she doesn't mean any harm. He claims she stopped him because he's a foreigner. She couldn't see who was driving the car. He's not interested. You can't force me to do anything, he says. She explains it to him again. It's voluntary. He should do the test, she'll check his pupils and if he's taken something, it's not a big deal. A petty offence, nothing more. She's just trying to do her job. It just keeps on raining. We all want to get home. He says he'll do the test. But he won't let her look into his eyes, not her. I hear her sigh. Perhaps you'll agree to my colleague looking into your pretty eyes, she says. You're bored, love, right? he asks. That was a mistake. Jovanna orders him to open his boot. Not bored, she says, not anymore. Her tone has changed, he's slow on the uptake. She wants to see his safety triangle, his spare tyre and his first aid box. All of a sudden, he's docile. No gloves in there, she notes. What gloves? he asks. Never heard of such a thing. Finally, he understands that this could go very badly for him if he doesn't pull himself together. Ms Coric orders him to sit back down in his car. Signal with your indicators, first right, then left. Water drips from the brim of my cap onto my nose. He tries to reason with her but first, he has to signal with his indicators, right then left, turn his headlights on full beam, half beam, turn on his hazard lights, and then turn them off. She tells him to get out of the car. He complies unwillingly, spots the gadget in Jovanna's hand and wants to know what it is. It's an instrument to test the tread of tyres. His whole body tenses and his pulse starts racing.



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Jovanna doesn't notice. It's time I got involved. I pull myself up and demand him to look me in the eye. No idea what he sees. Perhaps a light. But it's from my torch.

Just before the end of our shift, we're driving along Mehringdamm back to our station on Friesen Strasse. The guy in front of us is driving strangely, Jovanna says. It's a blue Clio. The spot check is over, I say, and want to leave him well alone. Ms Coric insists on pulling him over. Maybe she doesn't have a home to go to. Or not one she likes. At least it's stopped raining. We're on duty, she says. Yeah, sure. Amina koyuyum. There are three of them and they stink of booze. The driver refuses to be breathalysed. We have no choice but to bundle him off to the detention centre in Moabit. But there's no doctor there so we have to wait. Everything takes ages.

When I finally make it home, it's already past eight. I unlock the door, Baba should be awake by now. Baba? The door to his room stands open. Baba's not in the living room where I sleep and where the kitchen is. Baba? Are you in the bathroom? I push against the door. It won't open. Baba! He's had a fall and is blocking the door. Finally, he starts to move and drags himself away from the door. I push. He's shit himself. Starts crying. Sorry, Baba. I tell him about the drunk driver just before our shift ended as I heave him into the bathtub. Sit him on the chair. Shower him off. Today's my full wash day anyway, he says. He wants to shave. Katrin can do that later. The way he's trembling right now, I'll cut his throat. Isn't Katrin coming? Yes, she is, Baba. I dry him off and try to get him to walk. Right leg up! Left leg up! We make it into his room. I try to put a diaper on him. He shoos me away. I leave him and make breakfast so that he can take his pills. Otherwise, his engines won't get started. Baba shuffles in. Mind the edge of the rug! Right leg up! Left leg up! He wants me to tuck his shirt



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in. He forgot the diaper. What diaper? he asks and sits down at the dining table. I put his tea in front of him. He can hardly hold the mug. Take the pills first, I say. The tea sloshes over the rim and runs down his chin. It takes a while for the Madopar to kick in. I spread butter and honey on a sesame bagel for him. He doesn't want me to do so much overtime. No choice, Baba. Selda wouldn't have liked that, he says. I know, Baba. But Mama's not alive anymore. He nods. As if he'd forgotten. You have to sleep, my boy. He stands up, takes his plate, and makes it to his room without mishap. I don't manage to fold out the sofa, fall onto it and am asleep before I land.

I wake up to a clacking sound. Baba is sitting back at the dining table, slotting pills into a 7-day box. I haven't slept for even two hours. Baba is counting along. Monday. Morning. One Requip. One Motilium. One Madopar. One for high blood pressure. Or one for low blood pressure. Monday. Evening. Half a Motilium. One Madopar. One for high blood pressure. He's left out Monday lunchtime and Monday afternoon. His hands are trembling but not like before. But the pills still fall to the sides. Takes a while for him to collect them again. I ask why he doesn't let Katrin do it, she's coming soon anyway. I don't want any strangers in the house, he says and wishes me a good morning. He didn't want to wake me. You know Katrin, Baba. She comes every Monday, every Wednesday and every Friday. One Motilium. One Madopar. One for high blood pressure. The pills clack into the pillbox. You need your own room, my boy. Yes. Baba has made fresh tea, perhaps it'll be a good day for him. I go and have a shower. When the doorbell rings, I'm just coming out of the bathroom. Baba goes to the door, perfectly normally, as if it were nothing. Hello, Mr. Stummer, we're doing very well today. Katrin. We say hello to each other and I tell her that we've already done the full



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wash. And you can call me Markus. Baba. Katrin laughs. He wants to go out for a walk. Well, let's shave you first, says Katrin and steers him towards the bathroom. Everyone's moved away from here, he says, even Kaiser's supermarket has gone. It's called Rewe now, Katrin says. I look for my things in the small cupboard. Selda was born here, she's from Leuschnerdamm, I'm from Südstern, says Baba. Selda and I, we both ran away from home. Couldn't put up with our parents anymore. You're hard to put up with too, he says. Katrin laughs, and so does Baba. It's hard not to join in when she laughs. The medicine is kicking in. It makes Baba tell stories, even if they're always the same ones. Katrin lathers his face and shaves him. He doesn't like dry shaving. And the shaver's broken anyway. My Selda wanted to be a paediatrician, he says, but her school grades weren't good enough. It was her parents' fault, they didn't let her go to school. She had to take care of everything, Selda, just not her schooling. Then she became a kindergarten assistant. Katrin pretends she's hearing all this for the first time. She warns him that she's going to pluck his nose hair with a pair of tweezers. You'll feel a tweak. Selda was always good with children. Went to evening school later to do her A-levels. Wanted to prove herself. We'd already had Deniz by that time. She was really proud, Selda. See, Markus, I did it! she said. Is Deniz still here? I'm here, Baba! The last yoghurt in the fridge is past its sell-by date but there's nothing else. I slice an apple into it. We both ran away from home, Selda and I, otherwise we'd never have met. Mind the edge of the rug, Katrin warns him. We met in an assisted home, out in Spandau, he says, a flatshare for young runaways. Selda said that she missed the warmth in Spandau, she was homesick for Kreuzberg. Baba ends up back at the dining table, forgetting he's already had breakfast. Katrin peeks in the fridge and asks if she should quickly do some shopping for us. I shake my head, I won't have her do that. When Deniz was old enough for school, Selda said that our



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boy shouldn't start here. Growing up in Kreuzberg gives you a bad reputation. Deniz would be better off at a school with fewer foreigners, Selda said. There were all kinds of foreigners here – Poles, Russians, Turks, Lebanese, you name it. Katrin goes to strip Baba's bed. You don't have to do that, I say. Let me do it, she says and takes care of it. Baba carries on talking all the same. Worried about Deniz, she was, my Selda, and I said, Selda, look, I only grew up with Turkish and Arab friends. Doesn't mean we'll end up in the gutter. I have a Turkish wife. Selda, you're my wife, aren't you, but you still kept your name, it was important to you that Deniz had your name too, I didn't care. You always say, this is my home country, you always say that. We've made something of ourselves. Katrin has made up the bed and checks to see if Baba has sorted his pills correctly. I pack my rucksack. I thought you were on night shifts, Katrin says. She strokes my arm. You need new medicine, she reminds me, and have I picked up the prescription already? I'll take care of it, I say. What are you whispering about, Baba asks. We're not whispering, Mr. Stummer. Well, see, we've chatted our time away again. Baba's time is up, and Katrin has to leave. See you on Friday, then, Mr Stummer, bye Deniz, she says. Close the door! Baba calls after her. He stands up without any difficulty and wants to go out onto the balcony. I show him his lunch. Didn't manage to cook. Took it out of the freezer. I tell him to use the microwave, but not the oven, no way. Why shouldn't I use the oven? he asks. I write 'micro' on a label and stick it on his plate. So that he doesn't forget. I've never forgotten anything, he claims. I have to go. You only just got here. Still, my next shift is starting, Baba. Don't worry about me, my boy. Yeah, right.