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Sisyphus Jailbreak

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Content

The man nicknamed Sisyphus leaves his family during a vacation in Goa for no apparent reason. Left behind are his ten-year-old son Mark and his wife Marlis. While Sisyphus, plagued by remorse, tries to categorize his escape, Marlis reacts in panic. Just one day later, however, she learns from the credit card company that nothing has happened to her husband, but that he has withdrawn money from an ATM.

Independently of each other, they both begin to realize that their marriage has long since ceased to be a fulfilling partnership, but resembles a prison in which each has assumed the role of guard for the other. After initial resistance to this insight, they set out separately to find what they have given up or lost in their marriage. In the process, Sisyphus comes into contact with a crude mixture of spirituality and philosophy. Marlis experiences how little she is capable of real devotion. On this path to themselves, both have new experiences in which they experience moments of deep insight, but also of forgiveness.

When Sisyphus is sure that only he determines whether he accepts or shapes his destiny, he returns to his family and is ready to face his future life.

Since Marlis is not present on the day of his return, it remains open how their life together will continue. However, there will be no relapse into the state of a marriage built on dependencies after their transformation.

About the author

Rainer Grunert, born in 1958, trained as a typesetter and studied business administration and psychology. After several additional trainings, stays abroad and a start-up, he joined an international consulting company. There he specialized in strategic reorganization and information technology. In 2000, he set up his own business and worked until 2005 as a temporary manager for the management of large concerts.

Since 2006 he has been working as a coach in his own practice (www.coaching-zuerich.com) and together with his wife as a couples therapist (www.beziehungs-coaching.ch) in Zurich.

He has published a non-fiction book "Leiden oder Leidenschaft - Warum in Partnerschaften das Begehren verschwindet und wie Sie es wiedergewinnen" (Suffering or Passion - Why Desire Disappears in Partnerships and How to Regain It) and two essays "Anleitung zum wunschlosen Glück" (Guide to Happiness Without Desire) and "Vision einer fairen Wirtschaftsordnung" (Vision of a Fair Economic Order).

He also writes columns on the subject of relationships and partnerships at irregular intervals in "*Blick am Abend*".

It's not about that anymore,
to make sure that the sea remains calm,
but to adjust to it,
sailing into stormy, uncharted waters.

Ferdinand Magellan

It exists only in his head, yet a part of the universe has dissolved. What was solid is liquid. Vast, dark gray, threatening. He cannot distinguish between swallowing and ingestion. It stinks unpleasantly and sharply.

He smells gas.

Parts float in the broth. Some small, fast and sharp-edged, others massive and heavy. A large chunk pushes him to the end of the room, then the liquid lifts him.

Splinter. It burns. The smell of propane gas and the stench of smoldering plastic mingle. He cannot think, cannot plan ahead. Every impulse becomes instantaneous action.

A hole in the wall. It could have been a window. He manages to squeeze through, swallows brackish broth, then reaches for a piece of wood.

A mattress, which people are holding onto, flings past. It happens in slow motion and he has no thoughts. But even if he knew what was happening, he couldn't place it. It is beyond the dimensions of his imagination.

There is silence in his head, as if someone had turned off the sound. Then, after a brief pop in his ears, sounds hammer him. A deep rumble, and hoarse sounds resonate above the fundamental tone - screams.

The wood on which it hangs begins to bend. It seems to tear itself loose from something to which it is connected. A chunk hits him in the head and he feels blood trickle over his left eye, delayed. Warm. Suddenly it's as if he's flying, because the bar he's holding on to convulsively has come loose. He whirls around his own axis and lands on something he can't describe. First he hits it, then it carries him and he manages to get on his back, drifting a few feet. He reaches for something solid and doesn't know if seconds or minutes have passed until he realizes he has ground under his feet.

He runs.

But it is not running, rather he stumbles through a gray-black, tough mass. He falls on his face, picks himself up, runs, steps on something soft, human, but can still catch himself. A kick like on a slug, only much bigger.

He runs, stumbles and runs.

Where to he does not know.

Something is stuck in his leg, in the lower leg, in the long fibula muscle. He feels no pain, but it prevents him from walking; whenever he changes direction or hooks. He looks down at himself and sees that a carving knife has bored deep into his lower leg. One of those knives from the five-

star breakfast buffet, designed to carve a suckling pig as elegantly as possible. It serves its purpose - sharp, smooth and painless.

Interested, he bends down and looks like a person who has never seen cutlery before, at the part in his leg, his tattered pants and blood. He sees that he is not wearing shoes and feels like an insect that has just escaped the clapping hands of God.

He lifts his head and realizes that he is standing on a street. A main road in Kao Lak, right at the turnoff to the resort hotel where, until a few minutes ago, he had spent the vacations with his family. He looks down the dip at the entrance, but there is nothing like it was. There is a devastated world.

Then he feels the silence.

It is a different soundlessness than those before.

The first silence was audible: he was sitting at breakfast while Marlis and Mark were already on the beach. People were talking, muffled music in the background. Music like at airports - then it was suddenly quiet. Now he understands what made this silence: All at once the birds were missing.

This now is a different silence. He not only perceives it with his ears - it is a soundlessness that grips the body. A palpable silence, with a completely unknown smell.

Dead silence.

There are other people on the street near him, but he doesn't see them yet. Instead, he looks spellbound at the wasteland of rubble that stretches far and wide, all the way to the sea five hundred meters away, and he knows he won't be looking for Mark and Marlis.

He is dazed, but at the same time he feels liberated. It is over. He takes a breath and his head is filled with music: "Albatross" by Fleetwood Mac.

He doesn't have to wake up from a nightmare and laboriously find himself, because he wasn't dreaming. It was just an imagination of how it could have been, two years after the great tsunami in Kao Lak, when he spent the vacation there with his family. He often imagined it and a part of him secretly wished for it.

It did not occur.

Rather, a fortnight later he was on a plane back to Zurich with his wife Marlis and a whining Mark.

Three years have passed since then, and not much has changed.

His marriage has become even more boring, he has not divorced. Even his job is still the same.

Only the mortgage for the house, a row house that he thinks is far too expensive, a house he never really wanted, has decreased minimally.

To be fair, he doesn't paint his struggle against the waters and the possible death throes of Marlis and Mark too often. His story often doesn't begin until he reaches the main road where he escaped. It begins with him realizing that he has no shoes, but oddly enough, his passport and credit cards with him.

Why?

He doesn't know, he only knows that now life begins. His life.

Since he has heard that there were hardly any flights heading west after the real tsunami, in his imagination he does not fly home to Switzerland either, but over the South China Sea, to the Philippines. He lands in Manila and takes a cab for the seventy kilometers to Angeles City. There, he stays at the Swiss Chalet, which a colleague has told him about.

"Ask Hans for a deluxe suite. Costs little more than a regular room."

Over time, he expanded his fantasies: He googled the Angeles City map and also images with the keywords "Philippina Nude".

He knows that a pimp is called a "pimp" in English and a "bugaw" in Tagalog, and that it is better to take a girl straight from a bar to the room than to negotiate with a bugaw, from whom he would then only be fleeced.

"The price she makes. Without the champagne number. For that you pay bar fee. A kind of parking fee that the host pockets. All highly official. But maybe if it's late and she likes you, she'll give you a blow job for free. Anyway, they all get wet. Unlike the smoking Russian girls in the Onyx bar - nothing but push-up. After all, the Eastern hookers don't even get wet at the idea of a bungalow with a swimming pool anymore."

He imagines that when he leaves the bar it is raining. This reminds him of a thunderstorm on a hike in the school hostel when he was fourteen and in love with Annette and under the wet T-shirt her nipples became hard and he fell in love even more and afterwards, although he was in the room with eight other boys, he masturbated under the covers.

In his fantasy he strolls with the girl from the bar in the direction of Swiss Chalet, on the way they pick up a friend of hers. Then he lets himself be pampered by both of them. And because that's a good fantasy, over the next few weeks he always takes two or three of them up to the room and makes up for what didn't work out in his marriage.

In general, everything he never dared to imagine with Marlis, because they have been married

for twelve years and have a ten-year-old son with suspected ADHD.

He develops a very special idea: one Philippina, the one with the big, firm nipples, gives him a blowjob while the other one massages his upper body and rubs herself against him lustfully. She sits on him while doing this and pushes herself more and more towards his chin and then further up. There is a strange pleasure arising from the facesitting that is unknown to him. It is warm, wet and horny; he is defenseless and yet he has power. He who pays, leads. The fantasy is perfect for masturbation.

Unfortunately, he is far too seldom at home alone, and Marlis with her strict yoga body does not fit into this scenario at all.

It could have all been so good if a tsunami had come and destroyed the resort he had just rebuilt and put his life in order. He could have mourned Marlis and Mark, everyone would have felt sorry for him, and the best thing would have been that, without having to justify himself to friends and in-laws, he would have started a new, free life.

That's how he envisions it.

At first he was ashamed of such murderous desires, because the life he dreams of is connected with the demise of Marlis and Mark. When he thought of Mark, it gave him a twinge. Marlis, on the other hand, he could do without in his fantasy without the slightest hint of guilt. This ruthlessness in turn led to a deeper form of remorse. He wondered if he was really so cold and what had made him dull.

At some point, however, a colleague at work told him that he had once traveled through Brazil in a bus. Next to him sat his girlfriend, with whom there was always something: she was too hot or too cold, there were too many mosquitoes, she couldn't stand the food, and if they ever stayed in a really good hotel, it was too expensive for her. Anyway, he was on this bus and they were driving through the jungle and his girlfriend was whining that it was too drafty for her, while two seats up front a young Brazilian woman was sitting. Alone. She was dozing and smiling. When he saw that smile, the colleague said, he wished for nothing more than for the bus to go off the road, roll over, burn out, and for him and the Brazilian woman to be the only survivors.

In the middle of the jungle, he and she, naked and she naturally shaved, Brazilian style.

Things turned out differently, he married his girlfriend at the time and currently has not only two children but also a demented mother-in-law on his hands.

When the colleague told this story, of course only among men and slightly drunk, a load fell from his heart - he was not alone and he was not the only culprit.

On the Day of Judgment, hundreds, if not thousands, of men will be standing next to him, hoping for plane crashes, fatal traffic accidents, terrorist attacks, or, like him, violent natural events.

Women will stroll past them, with a look like shopping, through the gate of heaven, while men will be blamed for all the tragedies of the last hundred years.

However, catastrophes occur as little on demand as they can be stopped with wishful thinking and the calculation of a statistically negligible residual risk.

The hope that the good Lord would take the big rag and clean up his life was dashed. He lacked the courage for the other option, to sort it out and decide for himself.

So his fate came true: cowardice is punishable by life imprisonment.

Three years later, he's still married to Marlis, Mark's ADHD is getting worse, his job sucks, and in general.

Everything could have been so nice and simple: quick as a flash, with one pull of the cosmic toilet flush.

But even if it had happened, it would never have turned out well: After all, he would have remarried after the year of mourning and would probably now have a daughter without ADHD, but with a speech disorder or dyslexia or something else stupid.

It wasn't going to stop. Never.

However, this is not to say that there is no change.

True change, however, often begins on a small scale and without the destruction of entire regions - which does not mean that it is any less dramatic for those affected. It's just that they are not blows from an oddball god.

Rather, their triggers push subtly and almost unnoticed from the swamp of the unconscious to the surface.

It is precisely this repressed that comes to the fore when he, nicknamed Sisyphus, leaves a supermarket in Candolim, Goa, India, loaded with two plastic bags, one filled with water bottles, the other with bread, butter, Nutella and orange juice.

He hangs the bags on the hooks of the Honda Activa's seat and pushes the scooter backwards

off the stand. Then he turns it so that it could get onto the road in the direction of travel immediately after starting.

Sisyphus inserts the key into the lock on the handlebar fairing and switches on the ignition. He pulls the rear brake with his left hand and presses the starter with the thumb of his right. He has repeated this sequence of movements many times over the past few days. This time, however, something disturbs the flow, and a minimal delay is noticeable in the transition between starting and driving off.

"Go, drive! "

"Where?"

"Gone."

Sisyphus knows the voice.

It is threatening and seems to come from a dark area outside his inner order.

He squints his eyes and strokes his head, as if pushing the voice away. But what has mostly worked so far doesn't seem to be working now.

There it is again: "Wimp! "

"Why now?"

"Why not? Isn't every day a good day? Remember: Cowardice is punishable by life."

"Stop it! "

"I can't. Not anymore. Do you think I enjoy seeing that depressed, bored ass face every time you look in the mirror? No sex - no fun. And that on vacation. I mean, even if Marlis doesn't turn you on - at least to get rid of the pressure."

"Stop it! "

"Then drive! "

Sisyphus rolled from the supermarket parking lot to the side of the road.

He could turn left, take the next right, then through a small copse and he would be on his way to the apartment.

"Right, you brain-sick motherfucker. Tsunami fantasies. This is reality. Go on, right, and give some shit! "

Turning right when driving on the left. Sisyphus is a creature of habit, and even after ten days with the scooter he still finds it difficult. Nevertheless, he steps on the gas, gets to the other side of the road and is able to merge.

"Now what?"

"Just shut up and drive."

How Sisyphus hates this voice - this ruthless language. But he also knows that he cannot escape him. Him, the wild, unshaven journeyman, who always has slight eye rims and winks contemptuously at Sisyphus when he looks obliquely into the mirror in the morning while shaving. If Sisyphus is afraid of anything, it's of him - of his piercing gaze.

Marlis' complaining is nothing compared to that, it's harmless child's play, and even his Filipino hookers fall by the wayside with those penetrating eyes. The other one doesn't dream of life, he takes it. As it comes. And if it offers itself, he also lays one or the other on the way.

Sisyphus thinks he is so different from me, so without decency, and yet - unlike me: he is alive.

Sisyphus has reached the first traffic circle on the road to Calangute. In the middle is a white hermitage. The second traffic circle is coming soon, where he could turn off to Anjuna.

He drives the route every morning.

Mark, his son, then squats between him and Marlis, who admonishes him from the pillion: "Attention cyclists! Not so fast! Curve! "

Sisyphus has given up trying to defend himself against the lectures. He turns off the TV, and since Marlis cannot see his face from behind, he grimaces at her comments.

Otherwise, he is polite and drives considerately. Even on vacation he is a good Swiss.

That's why the idea of riding a scooter with three people seemed pretty outlandish to him at first. In the meantime, he has gotten used to it; after all, Indians ride four and five abreast on much older models.

While Marlis attends her yoga class in Anjuna, he goes to the beach with Mark at Lilliput. Later, they meet at the German Bakery, where they have breakfast.

Sisyphus he is only here because of Marlis - because of her yoga. She raves about the teachers in Anjuna - a completely different level than the housewife yoga in Zurich!

Now Sisyphus has reached the exit of Calangute. To the left is the Baga Bridge and he could drive back in a wide arc. He would then hardly have been on the road for more than half an hour.

"Straight ahead, sissy! "

Sisyphus hesitates briefly, but then continues in the direction of Anjuna. Over a hill, through a small hamlet where a working elephant is gathering wood in the marketplace.

The elephant is painted and has an Om sign on the forehead.

Om like at the beginning of every yoga class and later at the end Om, Shanti, Shanti.

He was once with. Never again.

Unerotic steel bodies in leotards and in between always a few fat and old, from which the paint is peeling.

Om, Shanti, Shanti.

And then this fuss, like in a church, only more detached: esoteric gymnastics.

Not that Sisyphus has anything against exercise or sports. At home, in Zurich, he goes to the gym himself and lately always goes on the treadmill on Tuesdays and Thursdays between seven and eight in the evening. Because that's when this little Asian girl runs without a bra. Or does she have such strong nipples? Sisyphus hasn't been able to get her out of his head for weeks.

"Is this going on again?"

"Just a thought."

"Fuck her! "

"I can't just ..."

"Sure you could, but you don't even have the courage to talk to her. The other day, for example, the towel slipped off her belt. All you had to do was bend over and ..."

"I missed that."

"Like so many things. Go, hup."

"Why? There is no reason."

"There doesn't have to be a reason for everything. Just honk. It's not there. The pillion is empty. Now honk already, sissy."

Sisyphus honks the horn and realizes that he enjoys it, that it frees him.

Pointless, purposeless honking. Who would have thought it could be so easy to get one step closer to happiness!

Sisyphus enjoys driving. Driving itself. Driving alone. No one to tell him to drive more carefully or slower, but he drives.

Nor does anyone tell him not to honk. He honks more often than necessary, and more and more often he grins. Doesn't it say "Horn OK Please" on the back of every major Indian vehicle?

"Horn OK Please" so that you are not overlooked when overtaking.

Everyone honks - only he shouldn't honk so much - because of Marlis, so that she doesn't get scared.

That's over.

Honking and driving are his life now and it seems that for a moment even the wild, unshaven journeyman in him smiles.

"Horn OK Please," because every honk is a shout.

But to whom does he call him, to whom does Sisyphus cry out?

Probably to himself. He seems to want to give himself courage, because soon he will pass Ingo's Saturday Night Market on the right side with the go-kart track next to it, and then after two kilometers comes the turnoff to Anjuna. This is where the familiar route ends: the morning yoga route.

So continue to let the horn scream: Here I come and also the blade of grass may protrude above the lawn - at least temporarily - on vacation - on a short drive.

He feels free, feels the wind and hears his horn, which occasionally mixes with the sound of other horns. Horns of other scooters, motorcycles, small cars, buses and trucks, emblazoned with the Om sign in color.

Sisyphus is driving. He accelerates and overtakes a three-wheeled van. A skinny worker sits on the loading platform and waves at him. He drives and honks, and he hasn't been on the road for half an hour yet. He could turn around at any time if he wanted to, and yet driving has him firmly in its grip.

A pothole makes the scooter bounce, but that doesn't matter. The Activa is built for Indian traffic: stable, economical, low-maintenance - only the headlight leaves something to be desired.

Sisyphus thinks: What's the big deal about sitting on a scooter and going out! He could turn back at any time. Nor is there anything final about his ride, unlike his thoughts three years ago in Thailand.

All at once, the memory of his tsunami fantasy and everything that could have followed it creeps into his mind. Only this time it is obscured by the thought of what would have happened if he had drowned and Marlis and Mark had survived.

Nothing would have happened: He has a good life insurance policy and his employer would have added to it. In addition, Marlis would have gotten his pension fund and they also have reserves. Marlis and Mark would be fine.

With this thought, another Sisyphus comes to the fore, a responsible one who slowly begins to doubt.

He honks angrily.

He has not yet passed the turnoff to Anjuna, he still feels the wind, and he still wants to drive.

There is still nothing unfamiliar about the route.

Nevertheless, you never know what the consequences of something will be. Changes are threatening - values provide orientation and a framework.

What is he actually thinking about - he is not fleeing after all!

He is going for a short ride towards Anjuna to the beach. Later he will have a coffee at the German Bakery, then he will get on the scooter and drive back. All in all, he will have been on the road for about an hour and a half.

This is no time. Even if he promised Mark to go swimming with him. Now he's driving, and he can still swim with him tomorrow. Tomorrow morning, after he drives Marlis to yoga and goes to Lilliput with Mark.

But instead of turning left to Anjuna, Sisyphus steps on the gas and continues straight ahead. He accelerates the scooter as he has never dared before, and suddenly there is a flash in his eyes.

It is a felt facial expression that Sisyphus is frightened by.

"Bravo."

"For what?"

"You feel it."

As if in slow motion, Sisyphus understands that a few seconds ago, something tremendous happened at the turnoff. He does not know exactly what, and yet he understands that his actions from now on have a dimension that goes far beyond his idea of the tsunami.

Also, Sisyphus knows, with a clarity never before experienced, that despite all his misgivings and despite all his remorse for not having gone swimming with Mark, he can by no means turn back.

It's a shock, but not a paralyzing one. It's more like arriving at the scene of an accident and thinking you've forgotten everything from your first aid course. Suddenly it's back and takes over.

Now it is he who has taken the lead over Sisyphus - he, the wild, unshaven journeyman without morals or decency.

He rides better than Sisyphus anyway - he's not so careful, so overly considerate, and he's not afraid of turning the scooter into a pile of rubble. Above all, even though he doesn't wear a helmet, he doesn't think about permanent brain damage as a consequence of the accident.

He drives and honks and laughs and scolds his god, "Come and get me if you dare! "

For Sisyphus, he adds, "It's been a long time coming."

"What? "

"Sisyphus' Jailbreak. Come on, wake up! Now life begins."

Sisyphus crosses the bridge that separates North Goa from South Goa. He pushes up his sunglasses, and suddenly he sees the world in new colors.

He breathes and sucks in the air enriched with carbon monoxide and particulate matter from a truck in front of him. Deeply. He feels like he can breathe properly for the first time in many years.

How he loves to smell gasoline! It's not a motorcycle, as in the time before Marlis, it's a shabby Indian scooter, but at the moment that's quite enough for him.

Sisyphus sucks in life with the stench from the exhaust. It's the mother's milk he's never had enough of. And even when overtaking cars keep kicking up unpleasant dust, he doesn't put his sunglasses back on.

At the moment, he wants to absorb everything unfiltered: Light, air, sounds.

Sisyphus steps on the gas as he drives over the bridge.

He overtakes a truck and waves to the driver. It's his first direct contact with a human being since this vacation began. Everything before felt pale - isolated, a feeling like being behind bulletproof glass. That's gone, it seems to have shattered at the turnoff to Anjuna.

"Horn OK Please" - he honks.

And as he honks the horn, he realizes that behind his escape, which he didn't realize was an escape until now, is a deep longing. The desire to be free and to feel. To feel himself.

Here the other looks scornfully: "You don't even know what freedom is. Being free from the family and the job or that no one catches you in your jerk-off fantasies? Freedom is a big word, don't even start with it. And now drive. Go on! "

"Where?"

"Arambol."

"Arambol?"

"It said there on the sign, besides, you liked the name on the road map, didn't you?"

"Why Arambol?"

"The Swiss Chalet in Angeles City is a bit too far, after all."

He laughs while Sisyphus honks and drives.

"Horn OK Please."

Beyond the bridge, the landscape changes: the roads become narrower and the traffic less. Sisyphus is now away from the tourist spots.

It also seems to him that it is no longer he who drives, but that it drives him.

The other one, the one who steered the scooter to the right on the road and who did not turn to Anjuna, pushes into the foreground, while the old Sisyphus disappears more and more.

Even when honking, two hearts now beat in his chest. One, the heart of freedom - unhesitating and spontaneous - it knows no past and no future, only the now.

The other, the heart of rational consideration and reason, it warns him that he can't just go on like this forever: "You can't just escape, run away, and follow the sweet promises of an uncertain future. That only leads to chaos."

The unshaven, wild fellow can only laugh about it.

Sisyphus' rising doubts are not even worth an answer to him.

Instead, he smiles at Sisyphus the detail-obsessed, because that's actually what Sisyphus should be called, since he usually does his work very precisely and accurately, attaching importance to decency and manners. He doesn't stand out, but does a quiet, perfect job from the background.

Yet he believes he knows how important his tasks are.

Sisyphus is a networker in a bank. That's also where he got his nickname. It was a colleague who let Greek mythology pass him by and who at some point confused the terms meticulous, pedantic, accurate and exact with Sisyphus' work or didn't dare call Sisyphus what he is, namely a Corinthian. The incident was years ago, but somehow the name has stuck, even his wife now calls him Sisyphus.

It doesn't sound bad either: Sisyphus the networker.

Whereas a networker in a bank does not create connections between people and does not span a net over the financial world. That would still be interesting: the world in Sisyphus' steel net and he master of the money flows that chase around the globe every second. An exciting idea!

In reality, however, a networker is a lonely technician, responsible for data lines. Sisyphus doesn't see the content of the messages that whiz through his network: e-mails, orders, quotes, in fact everything that makes the real money. Sisyphus sometimes compares his network to the sewage system of a large city, and he is responsible for making sure that everything flows and that there are no blockages or floods. Everything that floats in these pipes, the waste of real life with all its tragedies, doesn't interest him as long as everything flows through the pipes and catacombs in a regulated and clean manner.

But the reality is even worse, because a networker doesn't even care about the wires, copper or fiber through which his data whizzes; he only cares about data throughput and speed.

Everything else he buys from specialized companies. He doesn't even do that himself; the actual purchasing is done by the procurement department together with lawyers who draw up the contracts.

In the end, Sisyphus' only job is to monitor the content of these contracts and measure whether everything is above board, which is actually self-evident, since everything has been worked out by highly paid lawyers and provided with horrendous contractual penalties.

Sisyphus' challenge only begins when a line or anything else doesn't work as it should. That costs money - millions every minute. And because it's so expensive and can't happen to a bank, Sisyphus makes sure it never does.

That is the dilemma of a networker: He is not noticed and no one feels his necessity as long as the networks work. Actually, he is completely superfluous, because what could make him necessary is so secured that it will never happen with a probability of 99.9999%.

And if it did happen, there would be nothing Sisyphus could do about it. It would be his personal Chernobyl. He would appear busy, but he would not be able to prevent the data disaster; the networking of this world is too complex.

Nevertheless, network honor demands that we be prepared for emergencies, because then the rule is: one for all and all for one, and of course with respect and decency. After all, if the global data networks should actually collapse, there is a crisis plan that has been worked out down to the last detail and provides for an orderly process. Although it is unlikely that anyone will adhere to this plan in the event of a catastrophe, it is a good feeling to have a plan. It provides security - and isn't prevention the mother of all prudence?

Sisyphus feels gratitude for his job, even if he hardly gets any recognition: He gets to work behind the scenes, is not in the limelight, and still gets paid decently. The only thing that annoys him are the bonuses that his colleagues in investment banking or private banking pocket at the end of the year.

Without him, this would not be possible, but he is just the supplier. He also knows that if a catastrophe were to occur, he would be as superfluous as a sewer cleaner after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

Sisyphus' business card says "IT Director Network Infrastructure," and that does sound like something. Even if a director of a bank today is no longer the Mr. Director he was twenty years ago.

At the beginning of his professional career, Sisyphus had dreams and the will to create; in the meantime, he just about functions. He struggles to pass the time between trips to the cafeteria and, without appearing too bored, to get through superfluous meetings.

But being an "IT director network infrastructure" also has its good points: uncontrolled, unfiltered and unsupervised Internet access.

Sisyphus used to want to write and took an advanced course in German and French respectively in high school. However, his interest in art and culture was lost during his studies, and afterwards, like many others who don't know exactly what they want but can adapt well, he got stuck by chance in the bank where he was doing an internship.

Since then, everything has come together.

Nor does Sisyphus have any idea what else to do; since he is married to Marlis and the partnership is becoming more and more like the job, it seems that he has come to terms with his function of being a small wheel in a big gear.

At work as at home, among friends as when masturbating. Everything has regulated sequences. A man with shrunken, repetitive fantasies that hardly allow for variations, even on a small scale, because every movement is trimmed for maximum efficiency with minimum energy input. Sisyphus is lazy, inert and comfortable.

To keep life from becoming too monotonous, Sisyphus has developed a game that he plays on the car ride from home to work and back. There is a crosswalk on this route, which is crossed by a bike path. Traffic rules state that cyclists must dismount at such a crossing. Most don't. Sisyphus could still let them pass, but reserves the right to make that dependent on their look and appearance: If he interprets that a cyclist sees crossing as his right, he steps on the gas and gives him a good scare. If, on the other hand, he reads a submissive request from the look, he brakes with a smile and makes a patronizing gesture with his head.

It is only a game, of course Sisyphus would not run over anyone. He is not racist about Germans and Jews nor Yugos, nor does he have a sexist streak. The other day he even reprimanded a co-worker who dropped an unflattering remark about the Colombian intern in his department.

Still, Sisyphus must be careful not to become bitter, because even the best tsunami fantasies and cycling games wear out.

But even then, he might still toy with the idea of having an affair, even if he lacks the strength to make it happen. He could dream of change, even if it requires a drive he doesn't have. He could imagine what it would be like to be happy, even though he lacks the dreams and visions to do so.

By the way, Sisyphus used to be an athletic guy, even though he never exercised regularly except

for a little recreational kicking with fellow students.

By now he looks like a fleshed-out dumpling of resignation. Like a man who prefers a bad TV program and mediocre red wine to sex with his wife. Yet Sisyphus is not fat or out of shape, it seems rather that his skin has thickened and is now showing.

Despite all this, Sisyphus describes his life as beautiful, and when asked if he was satisfied, he would always answer yes.

The doctor, however, warns against a slipped disc, because even a burden that has been suppressed and carried in silence remains a burden. Whereby silence does not mean an inner stillness, but a despondent withdrawal, which lately increasingly turns into passive aggression towards Marlis.

Sisyphus then evades through silence.

The unshaven savage, on the other hand, had been missing for years, and so Sisyphus is honestly surprised that this locked-away me has appeared so abruptly beside him and is apparently still at the wheel of the scooter as they approach Arambol via circuitous routes.

Arambol - a name like from 1001 nights - a place of promises.

Arambol.

At some point he saw the name on a map and found it interesting. The name triggered associations.

Sisyphus drives into town and is disappointed: loud, busy, dirty and hot.

The road ends in a crescent-shaped bay by the sea, and something makes Sisyphus feel that he has arrived, at least for a while. He realizes that from now on there is no going back: no going back to the body of the comfortable, no going back to the thoughts of the comfortable. The wild journeyman has taken the lead and will not give it up anytime soon.

Sisyphus parks the scooter where the road turns into the beach and sees the shopping bags he hung on the hook on the seat in Candolim.

He hesitates for a moment, grabs it and throws it into a trash can standing in front of a store.

Then he strolls to the beach.

As Sisyphus walks to the sea, he does not look like a man who has just left his family. He doesn't look depressed or burdened with guilt, and if his eyes weren't covered by his sunglasses, you could even see a certain radiance. It's the kind of look that children have when they jump out of their parents' car after an interminably long drive and see the sea for the first time in their lives:

Astonished and full of expectation.

But how should a man on the run also look?

Rushed like Dr. Kimble or guilt-ridden like a condemned man on his way to the scaffold?

Probably every day we meet much more men and women who have just left their partner than we think. And they all look so normal, some even attractive.

Only the wildly unshaven one stands out; again and again Sisyphus catches himself greedily looking at breasts, asses and pelvises without paying the slightest attention to the face of the associated woman. It even seems that he avoids eye contact, eye touch, which doesn't exactly make him appear sovereign at the moment, more like a starved beach dog dragging an invisible trail of slime behind him.

"Don't gawk like that, it's embarrassing."

"And you, don't be like that - in the end it's all about fucking. Wanker! "

Sisyphus knows exactly what the savage means, and yet there are giant steps from mental onanism to onanism and then again from onanism to real life, in which, as we know, despite all fantasy, spontaneous coitus with strangers is rather rare.

But Sisyphus is not thinking that far at the moment.

Sex is part of his tsunami fantasy, but reality is different. It is determined by the fear of looking at the display of his cell phone, and not by a feeling of boundless freedom. He reaches into the outside pocket of his cargo pants and turns it off without taking it out, because he knows that if he let even a single message from Marlis get too close, he would immediately get on the scooter and drive back.

That can't happen now - no vibration will distract him.

For a moment, Sisyphus believes that by cutting off the communication channels and disposing of the shopping bags, he has also left part of his old life behind. He finds himself in a no man's land - the past is fading, but he has not yet arrived in the now either.

Nevertheless, his next activities will focus on this now, as Sisyphus realizes that he has neither a change of clothes nor a toothbrush.

He pushes this aside. First he needs a place to stay, a small room near the beach. It doesn't have to be clean or bright, Marlis would attach importance to that. But she is not there, and so he does not have to consider anything.

Since the savage is also contentedly silent, Sisyphus strolls across the beach and follows a narrow

path along the cliffs. Above the path, houses duck against the cliff, and merchants have set up small stalls along the edge.

Sisyphus doesn't have to wait: the way he walks, appraising the surroundings and looking at the houses, he is easy for touts to recognize as a newcomer. Contrary to his usual aversions to any "hello my friend," "come to my store," or "looking for room? ", Sisyphus willingly lets himself be shown several rooms. It even seems that he enjoys it, because he begins to joke with the mediators.

Unthinkable, if Marlis were there - he would be annoyed and would put his reluctance into his look. But because that doesn't work in India, Marlis would admonish him, "You're looking grim again."

At the end of the search, Sisyphus decides on a small, dark room, right on the beach.

What more does he want?

What is he in Arambol for, if not to enjoy this dirty and much too hot beach with too few umbrellas and without any service?

The elimination of all comforts reduces it to the essentials. Isn't that why monks voluntarily live in barren cells? And also in penitentiaries everything personal and the past are locked out?

The agent still asks if he can help with the luggage, and when Sisyphus says that he has none, he wags his head in Indian fashion. However, not as if he would agree, but in astonishment.

No need for further questions, as Sisyphus pays cash for a week in advance.

Sisyphus lies down on the bed and looks at the ceiling: no fan, no mosquito net. He doesn't care and feels his breathing become calmer.

He feels the hardness of the mattress and realizes that for the first time in an infinitely long time he has something like bodily sensations again. He observes a gecko and a huge black spider. A faucet drips in the bathroom. The dripping makes him relax even more deeply. It reassures him that no one is asking him to change anything in this world that was created and perfect for him.

He does not sleep and he does not think. He is simply there, just like archers when they fix the target with closed eyes. Unlike these masters, however, Sisyphus has no intention behind it: He does not consciously induce this state in order to ask himself later, when the arrow has hit or missed the target, "Am I dreaming or awake?"

Sisyphus is, as far as letting go is concerned, a beginner, like the novices in a monastery who shimmy from one ritual to another, having never learned to endure the silence in between.

He has been lying on his bed for over two hours now. The first time it went well, then thoughts began to penetrate to him. They are concerns about what Marlis and Mark are doing now, mixed

with a wild jumble of his principles and general philosophical thoughts about moral action.

There is nothing in the room to distract him: no horn, no left-hand traffic, no road dust - no Marlis and no Mark - no cell phone. In the background, beach sounds and a dull surf resonate, superimposed by the dripping of the faucet. The dripping is not identity-forming, however, but begins to be annoying. Without the dripping, however, it would be even worse. Sisyphus has also never learned to deal with silence and himself alone: It's as if something unpleasant is creeping up on him. Nothing namable, but he feels that something is missing. He doesn't know what, he can't pin it down, so he follows the first impulse that pushes it aside. Sisyphus ends the feeling of ominous emptiness by standing up and inspecting the shower at the end of the room.

He turns on the tap and tests whether the small instantaneous water heater on the shower head actually produces hot water. During this brief activity, everything worrying instantly disappears from his mind, because there is something to do: something to measure, test, assess - possibly also to repair or complain about.

But everything works, and since Sisyphus wasn't even interested in showering off the dust of the country road, he turns the tap off again.

With the disappearance of a challenge, the feeling of dreary loneliness that resonates over emptiness instantly reappears, and Sisyphus begins to spread out and sort the contents of his trouser pockets on the bed. Then he deposits some in the nightstand drawer, pockets some money, takes his cell phone, which is still switched off, and leaves the nine-square-meter room they rented him as an apartment, probably far above the normal price.

Outside it has begun to dawn and on the beach groups have lit fires.

Sisyphus strolls between them, to a bar. He buys three cans of beer, goes back to the beach and looks for a spot between two fires: not too far away, but not so close that he could be included. He knows no one, and that precisely is the liberating thing, that he knows no one and no one knows him.

Even the savage seems satisfied, he is noticeably more fixated on the first sip of beer than on the smell of marijuana drifting from the fire. It is a beautiful woman with dark hair who is taking a drag on the joint - an Israeli.

Sisyphus knows that they are here. He read it in the travel guide and he saw a report: It was about drugs, sex and forgetting in Goa. Maybe that's exactly what drew him here: forgetting his own personal tragedy and searching for who he is behind his facade. An identity that his father was already searching for and did not find, and that Sisyphus will never have either, because the prosperous Sisyphus will never understand the horrible, the sheer horror.

What thoughts!

It's time for the first beer, but before that try to turn on the cell phone. Now it's dark and it would be madness to ride a scooter from Arambol back to Candolim at night. Almost forty kilometers, even Marlis would have understanding for that.

Sisyphus' phone logs on, and a few seconds later he sees twelve call attempts and five text messages from Marlis. He doesn't read them, but takes a sip from the can, then deletes the SMS as well as the call list and switches off.

An image rises in Sisyphus: an army bulldozer with the Star of David - opposite it an old man with a turban. Why now, why on this beach? Sisyphus drinks large gulps, he smells the marijuana and he smells sex without eroticism, even if he has anything but desire at the moment. Then again he smells the fire, hears voices, someone tunes a guitar, no, two guitars are tuned to each other, while a thought of the savage pushes itself forward: God is sick. Seriously ill.

This is absurd - why just now, on this beach, these confused thoughts?

Sisyphus has no idea, he just senses that something is wobbling. It's not collapsing yet, but that's only a matter of time.

"Hava nagila. Hava nagila. Hava nagila venismechah."

Not now, thinks Sisyphus, while people are singing around the fire and he notices the smoky voice of the woman with dark hair. She has something mystically sad.

"Hava naranenah. Hava naranenah. Hava naranenah venismechah."

It is a melancholy that slowly but persistently spreads to Sisyphus.

"Uru, uru achim! Uru achim b'lev sameach."

Although he doesn't know the words, the song makes something resonate inside him. He would probably have to cry if he knew it meant, "Let's be happy and joyful. Let us sing and be merry. Awake, brothers, with a happy heart."

Sisyphus opens the second can of beer and gets angry.

He doesn't know what for, he just knows that everything annoys him. It started with this melody, then came a stray beach dog, now it's just the incessant smell of marijuana.

Of course, these are excuses, because it really started when he looked at his cell phone. Since then, he has only temporarily and inadequately managed to push his guilty conscience aside, and the savage who has supported him up to now also seems to have disappeared.

Sisyphus' beer-heavy conscience asks unpleasant questions about right and wrong - about the I and the others - about Sisyphus and Marlis. However, instead of keeping these questions with himself and penetrating them with the help of his mind in order to develop a very own value system at some point, Sisyphus projects them onto dogs, singing Israelis, he projects them onto the PLO and drugs, onto India and bad beer and everything that surrounds him at the moment.

Part of him says that he should pick up his phone right now and call Marlis, at least to reassure her and tell her where he is. Another part, however, feels that this thought alone is a personal failure, a return to prison.

How good that there is beer. Sisyphus has now reached the third can. Still alone, away from the group by the fire. Now, however, with a tendency to a medium melancholy that shifts his thoughts from Marlis to Mark, which immediately raises the question "Am I a good father?" arises.

What actually is a father, what makes a father?

Father, homeland, values. A fatherland for which one suffers and dies. Why not a motherland?

How will he die?

Shit, now even the savage does not help.

Responsibility and fathers and fatherland and traitors to the fatherland. Why does it all stick to you so much?

Why is man not a snake that can shed its skin once a year?

Sisyphus remembers the responsibility he had to assume at fourteen, after the death of his father. He thinks of the obligations he has to Mark, and with this feeling of a matter of honor, but also of a burden and of not being able and willing to fulfill it, his aggression increases. And as always, when Sisyphus gets in touch with his anger at himself, Heinrich comes to mind: Heinrich, his father.

Strange, his mother never comes to mind, always only Heinrich. It is as if she had a supporting role, one that one quickly forgets, even though she was the mother.

It's different with Heinrich, he can't forget him. Heinrich is omnipresent.

First, Sisyphus remembers an incident for which he still hates Heinrich. An exemplary Heinrich situation, and even if one should not hate his parents, it is the right word - cold and without forgiving.

It was a firemen's party, in the small town they had moved to - the dream of their first own house. Sisyphus didn't speak the local dialect, and he hardly made any friends at school. Instead, he was beaten up so often that at one point he no longer dared to go to school.

Despite his shame, he told his father, and Heinrich said, "Hit back! "

At this very firefighting festival, Sisyphus fought back and on his way home, because the other children had banded together, still ended up in a blackberry hedge. He was wearing a short-sleeved shirt and the spikes tore open the thin skin of the child. He came home quite covered in blood. Worse, the parents of the child Sisyphus had beaten up complained to his father, and in the evening Sisyphus felt his strap. Because hitting back was okay, but please not so that the parents of the other complained about it!

Despite this contradiction and Henry's inclination toward violence, Sisyphus looked up to his father like all children. Who was one of the most important in the village? - the father! Later, Sisyphus understood that his father's whole life was an inextricable contradiction. He understood that his father never found a home and himself never knew what a father was, what an identity was and what it meant for values and straightness. It was when Sisyphus began to think about whether there was something like providence, an all-controlling hand, causalities in the world structure, or something like personal freedom and responsibility. This brought him to philosophy, especially Camus and the existentialists fascinated him.

Now Sisyphus would like to talk to Heinrich. He is angry, desperate and has questions. He would like to reproach him for many things, and yet he could not imagine walking even a meter in his father's moccasins. They were different times and circumstances, and yet there are similarities. He runs away and Heinrich has run away as well - probably even more than once.

His father had a tattoo on his arm and fine shards of coal in his back. Heinrich explained the coal inclusions with a mining accident that he had just survived. The tattoo, a sun, had other, defiant reasons.

Heinrich was born in 1921 in the Silesian coalfield, the son of a Jewish coal miner and a Catholic. He was the eleventh of twelve children and learned the craft of stonemasonry. Although this profession shaped Heinrich's artisan skills, he never worked in it; rather, the higher pay drew him to the coal mines.

Sometime during this period he must have heard about the Haganah, an organization of young people somewhere between the Russian shtetl and Palestine. He was fascinated that there should be an organization that worked for a "national home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

Palestine must have had a sound then for his father in Silesian as Arambol has now for Sisyphus. A promise. However, his father never came to the land that today is called Israel. and has long since ceased to promise dreams. At that time there were still dreams, because Israel did not exist, it was only a thought, and Heinrich wanted to get involved. He was not taken seriously, because

he only had a Jewish father, while his mother was a non-believer, a shiksa. Perhaps there was no branch of the Haganah in Silesia, perhaps it was all just a fantasy, an illusion with which Heinrich fantasized about the possibility of breaking out of the miner's milieu together.

Anyway, he had a Star of David tattooed on his arm, but that didn't help either. The Haganah did not want him. The fact that he was not a real Jew for the Jews would not have protected him from the Nazis.

So Heinrich, shortly before the Reichskristallnacht, had the Star of David tattooed over. It became a sun, and since he was gifted as a stonemason and could make a stamp out of soft soapstone, Heinrich created a flawless Aryan family tree for himself.

He became homeless.

One last time he tried to find an identity among remnants of the Social Democrats, but here he clashed with the proletarian tendency toward anti-Semitism.

No Haganah, no Social Democrats - and Heinrich's mother died in childbirth of the twelfth child in childbed, the father a little later in a carelessness, a finger caught in the pit elevator, of blood poisoning.

There was nothing Heinrich left behind when he was drafted into the Wehrmacht in 1941.

Then followed a period Heinrich never talked about, but he was probably deployed as a radio operator in the Balkans and later on the Eastern Front. In his draft card there are names of bad places.

Heinrich's memory only resumed when he fell into Russian captivity and spent more than three years there under the worst of circumstances.

After his discharge, Heinrich turned his duty as a soldier into his new profession by training as a telecommunications craftsman. He got a quiet position at the post office, but still found no peace. He was restless and moved around the new republic, but did not warm to the country. He developed a furious dislike of authorities and railed against the former Nazis who were back in their old positions. And he railed against Herzl and Ben Gurion and the now existing state of Israel, for Heinrich was now a de-Nazified German who had never been allowed to be a Jew and thus again had no access to the Promised Land.

Yes, he had a Jewish father, but he was not a Jew and he would not become one. Heinrich was a circumcised lost between worlds. Bitter and restless.

He had finished with Germany, and since telecommunications craftsmen were wanted, he was able to emigrate to Switzerland. Here he moved near Basel and met his wife, a Swiss woman 12

years his junior.

Sisyphus often wondered if his father ever loved his mother. A helpless question - somehow both were lost in a desert and each believed that the other possessed the map to the oasis. The mother held out quietly, the father beat desperately - they did not find the oasis and both lacked the courage to separate. The mother from this mountain village in Graubünden, who was concerned about appearances and the neighbors, and Heinrich, the rowdy German - what a couple!

Meanwhile, Sisyphus is sure that Heinrich never really returned from the war. He was physically present, but he was not there as a father. Something in him was dead long before he died. Then, when Heinrich really left after his fourth heart attack, Sisyphus remained strangely unaffected. It even seemed that in the beginning he was happy about the new freedom.

Now he is missing Heinrich and Sisyphus has a lot of questions. He is angry that Heinrich never taught him what it means to be a man. That the great Heinrich never showed him what a straight path is and what standing by himself means.

If it were possible, Sisyphus would call Heinrich: He would scold him, talk to him, he would beg for his love and try to figure out how to do the things at hand.

What do you have a father for!

Then Sisyphus laughs scornfully: As if Heinrich could tell him that, he of all people!

Yes, especially Heinrich with his double standards, but also the basic reason for everything human - fear and hope.

When Marlis first saw a photo of Heinrich on the dresser at Sisyphus' mother's house, she was shocked by the resemblance after all the stories, because in fact Sisyphus is the spitting image of Heinrich. Later, Marlis tried to convince Sisyphus that his father had died of a closed heart. But as little as in predestination Sisyphus believes in psychosomatics.

Heavily intoxicated, the savage volunteers, "A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do."

But what if the man knows nothing?

What, but if he does not even know what a man is?

He has to go out and find out.

He has to face up - not Marlis or Mark, but himself. He has to move on and tackle the deferred challenges. They are his own difficulties, even though he keeps pointing the finger at Marlis. She is only a mirror.

He will not call Marlis.

He could call tomorrow or never call again - the sea could swallow him up - he could stay in Arambol forever making jewelry or leather sandals or stealing tourists cameras and selling them to Indian fences.

Yes, why not make jewelry!

Sisyphus looks up at the sky and for the first time during this vacation consciously sees the firmament - the stars trickle down on him.

Then he realizes that he is crying.

He does not know why.

The beer or "Hava nagila" must have made him sentimental.

He must go to bed. Quickly. But not without buying another can of beer first.

What kind of life is it where you can't fall asleep until you've had four beers, even after you've escaped?

Nothing works without nightcap anymore.

What kind of marriage is it where night after night you lie next to the same woman you once loved and whose body you coveted, and now you wouldn't touch her for anything in the world!

A woman whose disappearance one longs for, because every closeness makes something in one contract .

What kind of relationship is it where you live next to each other, try to avoid any touching and are happy when the other person leaves the house before you!

What kind of partnership is it where you dream of running away, but don't even have the courage to let the thought arise within you, so that at some point the resolve becomes so powerful that it drives you before it!

Sisyphus knows that he has long since become the proverbial sow.

Why else does he usually leave the house in the morning long before Marlis has woken up?

Something like that can't go on forever.

Things come as they come, and you have to go out to meet them. If you don't do this, things will run after you and at some point they will get you by the scruff of the neck. For sure.

A man flees his marriage and leaves the family from one second to the next. This is nothing unusual, but daily business of thousands of lawyers. What is different here is that the man does not file for divorce, does not even think about divorce. He neither planned nor prepared his act, but it

happened, and now he has to see how he can cope.

It was an act of affectation, like manslaughter.

Suddenly the perpetrator regains his senses and sees what he has done: He is startled by the blood on the floor and feels the hammer in his hand. He cannot believe that he has struck, and yet he knows that there is no turning back. He can turn himself in immediately or, as he has seen on television, roll the body into a rug or cut it up and freeze it to dispose of later on a new moon night.

So far, Sisyphus has not killed anyone. In the next few days, however, he will commit a murder - a metaphorical one: He will tear out of himself and dispose of the image of the formerly beloved and the illusion of the perfect family.

Then Sisyphus will kill the old and comfortable Sisyphus to rise like a phoenix from the ashes. He will make room for something new, even if he has no idea at the moment what this new thing could be like. And in all this, Sisyphus has no choice, because he has already gone too far for that. He could delay the next steps, but he cannot turn back the wheel.

Why all this - what horror must this be?

What is it like, this unbearable marriage and family that he maneuvered himself into that he must leave behind in order to breathe again and feel a spark of life within him?

It is an ordinary marriage that Sisyphus and Marlis live: One of millions of ordinary marriages - a partnership like many live. There is nothing special about it: no special suffering, no crushing burdens of the past, no destroyed childhoods, and no war or refugee drama.

The misfortune is, it's a fair marriage: a marriage where you go easy on yourself and don't want to harm the other. Collegiality comes at a high price: lust and ecstasy have disappeared, there has long been no time or space for them. Too dangerous.

It is a marriage in which both try hard not to be aggressive or loud, in which both suppress their affects, and if there are any difficulties, they have a temporary communication problem that can certainly be solved in a matter-of-fact and calm way. By mutual agreement and without creating waves.

No one has to venture out onto the sea of passion.

Everyday life is dominated by duties: Work, mortgage, visits to Sisyphus' aging mother, in-laws, and silly vacations, like this one in Goa or years ago in Thailand or in between in Ticino.

Beautiful and empty.

Everything is regulated, well-ordered and casually, decently arranged.

No one has any reason to complain, and yet a tenacious numbness weighs over everything.

It's clear that sex has long since disappeared and even the kissing closeness is only a strange ritual whose origin can only be guessed at.

For seven years, Sisyphus has escaped from this padded cell into his work. He is a free man with a sentence of life imprisonment. A donkey who has forgotten that he could buck and stop.

Marlis, on the other hand, takes refuge in raising children and hides behind Mark. As long as she worries, she is busy. She doesn't have to feel her sexual dissatisfaction and inner emptiness then.

And doesn't she have good reasons for her fears?

Life is not nearly as easy as her comfortable Sisyphus imagines. Instead of calming down in the evening after a well-organized day, things only get worse. After all, a worry rarely comes alone; and once you start tidying up, organizing and arranging, you will inevitably go from the hundredth to the thousandth.

There is no end to it. Never.

All esoteric and all physical training through yoga does not help.

What is too much is too much.

Letting go?

For heaven's sake, then nothing would work at all and Mark and Sisyphus would perish faster than they can think.

Marlis has long known this pressure to keep things under control.

It is older than the Sisyphus time, because in Marlis there are only a few, distant memories of situations in which she was satisfied with herself, relaxed and full of confidence.

Now she sits with Sisyphus in a dungeon where each is the other's keeper. The fear is too great and the unspoken contracts are too binding.

Like most people, Sisyphus and Marlis tend to remain in the existing. This is what they know, this is the stable they come from, this is the smell. Stinky as it is, it is familiar.

What else is there to wait for out there?

To be sure, there are reports of freedom and ecstasy, they tell of the uncontrolled and a wildness that explodes conventions.

But who has sighted such a specimen - a human being who is really alive?

Most of the time, the stories passed on via hearsay or the tabloid press turn out to be fantastic spinning, just like the Loch Ness Monster or the Yeti.

Besides, what will the neighbors think?

Sisyphus has a fantasy there, by the way, one of the few in which Marlis also plays a role, but especially the neighbor.

She is about the same age as Marlis, has two children, and with her husband Sisyphus has already emptied more than one bottle of wine. The man is a good one, just like him. In Sisyphus' B-movie, however, the man does not appear.

Sisyphus and Marlis are tied up. The neighbor is a kind of dominatrix and both have to do it to her again and again, but also with each other. In all imaginable positions. The togetherness is the most exciting part, because the neighbor forces Sisyphos and Marlis to do everything they can't imagine themselves. She forces both of them to go beyond their shame and far beyond their imagined limits. In the end, Marlis and Sisyphus are chained to each other on the bed while the neighbor watches a soap on TV, only to start the game all over again.

In fact, Sisyphus can imagine sex with Marlis in this situation, but probably only because the fantasy mirrors the partnership. Because it translates the state of being trapped together into the sexual, and there, unlike in everyday life, it can very well provide sensual pleasures. Everyone must submit, because the inevitability is sealed by a captivated desire.

Normal life, meanwhile, is on a different level: that of struggle. Both are convinced that everything could be fine if only the other would change, if he would give in a little. Then everything would be perfect. But since the other doesn't change, all that remains is the hope of winning the lottery or an inheritance, even if loved ones die for it, or else a tsunami sweeps away everything that disturbs them.

Sisyphus and Marlis were once in couples counseling - a single session. The therapist talked about mutual respect and letting go; and about the inner prejudices and images. The images of the others, the images of the parents and neighbors, the ideas that everyone carries inside, and the desperate effort to get these images, which can never be congruent, congruent.

She suggested that they both give each other more space, that they each have their own room, and that they both go back to living their own lives, at least some of the time.

What was that number supposed to be?

Give up the shared bedroom?

What should the friends, parents and in-laws think?

And Mark?

Sisyphus thought this was a stupid idea, although of course he was thinking of finally being able to masturbate in peace.

Marlis didn't go anymore because her arranging, her cleaning, and her tendency to take responsibility for everything would have been on the agenda for the next session. But it was she who had suggested the couples' counseling. She had expected female solidarity and hoped that, for once, an outsider would read Sisyphus the riot act. Marlis had not expected that her lack of self-love would become an issue.

After all, the result was that they agreed once again for a long time: never again to a psycho.

The real reason why both came to this decision, however, is not to be found in separate rooms or Marlis' delusion of control. Rather, the therapist addressed right at the beginning how both of them condition each other and create their prison out of the fear of facing life. She said that Marlis and Sisyphus were mirrors for each other, and so after the session they were both terrified of what might blow up in their faces if they even began to engage in change. Not to mention personal growth. That would have meant a clean sweep, only to discover that there was nothing left but broken pieces.

The risk of drifting rudderless on the relationship ocean for a while was too high for Marlis, like Sisyphus.

Where will we end up if we let everything get out of hand?

Now everything has gotten out of hand.

But if we turn back time a bit, to when Sisyphus leaves the supermarket, Marlis doesn't know all that yet.

Marlis is blond.

Not really, but years ago, when the gray increased, Marlis decided to be blonde. Before that she streaked, and even much earlier she had described her hair color as a mixture of light brown and street mutt.

It was exactly the color of the dog that crawled under her sun lounger and that Mark was currently petting.

Does the boy have to touch everything! He is so sensitive and who knows what these beach

dogs have on them. Afterwards it starts again with an allergy, or he forgets to wash his hands.

"Stop petting the dog."

"But it's so nice and soft."

"He may have fleas or germs."

"He doesn't have fleas. Look, he has a flea collar."

As if a flea collar would protect against fleas! The same stupid reasoning that Sisyphus has. As if things were so simple - and who has to bother with a rash or flea powder or school in the end!

What would it look like if Mark brought in fleas?

"Mark, now stop petting the dog. And take one of those wet wipes out of my pocket before you touch the water bottle."

"He's so cute. Look how he licks my hand."

"Mark, that's enough."

I wonder where Sisyphus is. He wanted to go swimming with the boy. Why do men need twice or three times as much time as women for such simple things as getting food?

Marlis is annoyed.

She is annoyed that with everything that happens, with the slightest delay, a disaster program immediately starts in her: Fleas, lice, bugs and now: where Sisyphus remains.

It is dangerous with the scooter. Especially in India.

Marlis pushes the thoughts aside and puts her energy into one last request to Mark.

"Mark, now leave the dog alone." And to the dog, "Get lost. Go."

The mutt gets up and crawls under another sunbed two sunbeds away.

"Mom, you chased the dog away."

Can't Sisyphus be on time for once? He could swim with Mark and she could talk to the woman on the lounge next door about the yoga class. There are a lot of things to talk about.

But the thoughts do not diminish: Sisyphus has an accident, Sisyphus has a heart attack, although he is too young to have one, but the sun! Sisyphus has sunstroke. Sisyphus has been mugged.

Sisyphus is an adult, she knows that, and yet sometimes these fantasies set in after just a few minutes.

Why does he have to be so unreasonable, too?

This is not only the case here, but also in Zurich: He drives too fast with his car, she has to warn him about the speed cameras - and here without a helmet, although he cannot drive too fast with

his scooter.

She has to get rid of Mark right now or it will be too much.

"Mark, don't you like to play with the twins on the beach? "

"No. You chased the dog away."

"Mark, look, the twins are sitting there by the cabin having a drink."

"They drink Coke."

Marlis rummages in her bag and gives Mark money.

"Then buy yourself a Coke too - but just one, you know too much candy isn't good."

Mark grabs the hundred rupee bill, "Hmm, Coke, yummy. Thanks, Mom." And away he goes.

Finally Marlis can talk to her beach neighbor.

In the course they are twelve women and three men. Two of the men are bores, weird old hippies. Not that they don't have anything, one even looks like George Clooney, but the hygiene standard of their hair leaves something to be desired. Also how one of them sweats. Like an animal. Of course, perspiration says nothing about mental or spiritual development, and yet there is a definite too much.

Then there is another man in the class, but he only has eyes for the woman in front of him on the yoga mat. Both always have the same place. He's exactly behind this woman who never wears a bra and whose T-shirt always slips so that he sees her breasts during Adho Mukha Svanasana, the dog looking down.

She does that on purpose. And the man seems to have eyes only for these breasts, even if he flirts with one after the other in between.

That men are so into tits.

And this is not a tight shirt, it's a wide shirt. It is a very special Indian shirt. A shirt that is supposed to slide up during Adho Mukha Svanasana to show that it is possible without a body or bra.

This game is so unappetizing.

Then this place, the yoga school: the teacher is very good, but the mats they have there! They must be years old.

Whether the Indians disinfect?

The women confirm to themselves that they don't even want to know who has been doing it on it within the last few years, and assure themselves that they bought their own yoga mats right

from the start.

Where do they even get the idea that anyone could do it on the mats after the course ends?

Is it the envy of the dispossessed?

But what the heck, there is no place in the world where there are such good yoga teachers, even if there is nothing else here. Which is not true, because there is a lot of trouble: the traffic on the street is worse than the rush hour in Zurich. It stinks and it's noisy and then they burn this plastic everywhere or they throw it behind the beach huts, and the sea is a stinking sea, even though it doesn't really stink, it just looks like it should stink.

That's hot! And where did Mark go anyway?

Also, Sisyphus is really overdue.

Marlis discovers Mark on the beach with the twins and Sisyphus texts him, "Where are you? LG M."

How can you spend your vacation in such a place. No animation or care for the children. But there are no good yoga teachers in a club.

Then both women confirm to themselves what kind of vacations they usually go on: Club or five-star hotel, the best care, exquisite food - but here - here is just the best yoga.

Outside, my goodness, you just have to close your eyes for once. In fact, that's the only reason they're here, and it took enough work to convince their husbands to take this vacation.

Even the sun does not sink into the sea, but mostly it is hazy over the sea, so that a quarter of an hour before the sun would sink into the sea, the haze swallows it.

Never again India!

Then the traffic - far too many Indians - aspiring, arrogant middle class. Yet this is supposed to have been paradise once. Road traffic - this word alone causes a slight uneasiness to rise in Marlis. Sisyphus is not long overdue, maybe an hour, yet something might have happened.

Marlis hates these thoughts, she hates it when she worries, and yet she cannot defend herself against the worries. When she opens her mouth and speaks out her worries, she gets even more annoyed, because she knows that she provokes Sisyphus with it.

What should she do?

It's just the way she is: she worries and it rises in her - and isn't it the case that Sisyphus drinks too much red wine and moves too little?

There's no red wine here, only gin and tonic or beer, but even here he immediately found a drinking buddy.

No matter how hard Marlis tries, she can't think of the name of Sisyphus' new friend. It's one of those esoteric names. Something to do with Prem Blabla. Prem, Marlis knows, means heart in Sanskrit.

What does alcohol or booze actually mean in Sanskrit?

Strangely, Sisyphus can't remember any other names and has an enormous aversion to their spirituality, but the name of Prem Blabla, he immediately kept it. Since then, the two have greeted each other as if they were old friends. Yet he has only known him for a week. Men are simple-minded, as soon as they have someone to drink with, they are happy.

The wife of this Prem is an American yoga teacher, Marlis sees her from time to time in her group in Anjuna. She also offers classes herself.

But that's not where Marlis and her interlocutor go anymore, because once when they were there, this same Prem, Sisyphus' drinking buddy, suddenly stood in a tiger thong at the entrance to the exercise room and greeted the visitors.

Impossible. Especially since he's approaching fifty.

Besides, she reminds the woman of the classmate in Anjuna, the one who always comes without a bra. Although it's okay not to wear a bra if you can, and it's nice as long as gravity hasn't taken its effect, but she has nipples, such that she should definitely wear a bra.

She is not to be envied.

Marlis blasphemes with her ally- and it's not limited to this one woman or Prem Blabla or the one who offers the yoga here, or one or the other in the yoga class. But it goes on and ends in a kind of self-pity, about their roles as mothers, housewives and the sideline and inability of men. And further: how difficult it is to survive with such men on an Indian beach and with a yoga class in Anjuna.

It's so nice not to be alone with your feelings, but to have a sister for all the things Sisyphus doesn't understand at all.

Nevertheless, when the husband of her interlocutor approaches, the feeling rises in Marlis that someone is missing. Sisyphus is missing, and for the first time Marlis realizes that two hours have passed and that Sisyphus is now really overdue.

Maybe he lay down in the apartment after shopping and fell asleep. That looks like Sisyphus: Comes back from shopping and lies down, although he actually wanted to go swimming with Mark. Or maybe he's met his drinking buddy and they're sitting in Harmony drinking their first gin and tonic.

Then he could at least answer the SMS.

Marlis writes a second, a clear one: "Mark is waiting."

As there is still no answer within ten minutes, Marlis calls Sisyphos, but only the mobile box answers.

Something might have happened, because actually Sisyphus is reliable. He could have had an accident with the scooter or something similar. Sisyphus could have gotten into a police check. She told him to take the international driver's license, which he doesn't have, and he might have been arrested and is now sitting in an Indian police station.

A kidnapping, on the other hand, is categorically ruled out by Marlis, because who would kidnap Sisyphus!

One thought that doesn't occur to Marlis at all is that Sisyphus ran away or fled and left her. That doesn't exist, and what doesn't exist can't happen.

So something bad, by now something extremely bad, must have happened. Sisyphus may have his rough edges, but he can be relied on. If she didn't know that, she would certainly never have a child with him, and certainly never have signed a mortgage. He is accurate and sometimes correct like an accountant, and that must mean something has happened. She tries to reach him again on his cell phone, but again only the mobile box answers.

She sends another text message, "Dear Sisyphus, please call me urgently. Kiss Marlis."

No answer.

There is still an hour until sunset. The couple has said goodbye and the twins' mother has brought Mark back from the beach. It's time to shower and change, then, following the daily ritual, meet again on the beach to watch the sunset.

Sisyphus is three hours overdue.

The catastrophic scenarios become more intense in Marlis' mind, and Mark also becomes hungry and crotchety. Call again and then, don't let on, don't drive anyone crazy. For with all the great accidents that can be assumed, there is another Marlis who doesn't want to make a fool of herself over a man who has fallen asleep in the apartment.

How she hates to lose control and become hysterical, but now she will anyway, because the apartment is locked. The key to the apartment is in the agreed hiding place. Sisyphus is not there, and there is no scooter in the place where he usually parks it.

Something must have happened. A real catastrophe. And Marlis thinks: My goodness, now I have two children. But first I have to take care of Sisyphus, even though Mark is hungry and

whining and desperately wants to eat the pizza that Sisyphus promised him against my will.

Things are getting bad in Marlis.

Mark, meanwhile, is sure Sisyphus will be back - he would never leave him.

"He must have left with the Prem."

"Nonsense. Then he would have called."

"Why don't you call Prem?"

Marlis doesn't have a number for Sisyphus' drinking buddy, so she takes hungry Mark by the hand and trudges through the small woods toward the supermarket. She crosses a main street and stands in front of the building, which contains several stores and an Internet café. She rattles them all off and asks about Sisyphus, asks about an accident, but no one remembers an accident, nor does anyone remember Sisyphus.

Now it's time to be organized and stay in control: Marlis walks toward the big supermarket, along the road for about half an hour. Always making sure that Mark doesn't get caught in the traffic or stop enraptured.

"Mama, a cow. Mama, an elephant."

These are Indian streets, they have no sidewalk, instead they have holes the size of buckets. They don't have any lighting either, it's dark and dusty. The light of the cars is blinding - and this constant honking! As if everyone wanted to show: I honk, therefore I am. Between the cars and where the pedestrians walk, scooters and motorcycles push their way through. Reckless. Then another cow stands in the middle of the road. Honking.

In between, Marlis keeps taking her cell phone out of her pocket and trying to reach Sisyphus.

She asks people she thinks might speak English or German about an accident, but no one knows anything. Another text message and again no answer, and Mark, who by now is sobbing and thinks his mother is hysterical and out of her mind.

Back to the beach to look if she knows anyone, but the people she met are not there. She knows from the woman she talked to this afternoon that she went somewhere else with her husband for dinner. She doesn't know the name of the restaurant, nor does she have a scooter. Back to the apartment to look for her landlady, but she's not there either, and Mark is getting hungrier and crankier, while she's lost all appetite.

Call again and again the mobile box. SMS again.

And then: To where she doesn't want to go, to the woman who offers yoga near the beach. The wife of Sisyphus' drinking buddy. Surely both lie under the table and exchange ideas about things

for men.

But the lights are off there too, only the Indian-speaking housekeeper is sitting by a small fire in the front garden boiling water.

Everyone seems to have left. Then Marlis realizes that it's Saturday and Saturday is Saturday Night Market. The stupidest day Sisyphus could have chosen for his bad joke.

Again the thoughts: that something terrible has happened, and now she is quite sure that something dramatic has happened, that she must take things in hand.

Strangely enough, the hysteria disappears abruptly at the thought of having to plan everything down to the last detail from now on: this is the only way to counter a disaster.

She drags Mark to a kiosk and buys him a bag of chips and Coke. For herself, Marlis buys a pack of cigarettes and matches, even though she quit smoking four years ago.

It seems that another part has taken control in Marlis. But it is not the wild journeywoman, as in Sisyphus. It is a controlling part. A part that has to take control of life, because maybe Sisyphus will never come back, maybe he is dead.

Accidents in India often end terribly bloody.

Action is good - action is distracting.

Marlis does what she has always done in stressful situations, she switches into active, organizing mode, and instantly the useless thoughts and disturbing feelings disappear.

There is something to do, regardless of whether it is Zurich or India. It also doesn't matter whether it's about Sisyphus' sick mother, Mark or repairing a dishwasher. In active mode, Frau is on her own, and that's a good thing, because anyone who would interfere with Marlis would be disruptive. She manages well on her own. Most of the time.

Organizing something feels good. It's Marlis' childhood program: Her mother was often sickly - not really sick, but suffering from a condition between melancholy and mild depression that doctors couldn't explain. It affected her stomach and then she lay in bed for days. When Marlis thinks about how her mother let herself go - there was nothing about pulling herself together the way she has to now. Rather, her mother somatized without restraint, while her father, the wimp, kept quiet and withdrew.

But it's also good to have learned early on to stand on your own two feet and set the tone. At any rate, it's extremely helpful at the moment, because now Marlis has to act.

That's good, then she can't brood.

There is a disaster to manage, because something has happened to Sisyphus and she is the only

one who can save him. In concrete terms, that means reporting a missing person to the police, then the consulate, then blocking Sisyphus' credit cards, and there's Mark.

Time is short; change without showering and make up briefly. : a light dress, matching pashima scarf and hair tied in the back - plus color-coordinated flip-flops.

It is elementary to make a good impression. No matter in which situation - and of course the first impression is the most important one.

What would it look like if you neglected every little thing!

That can't happen to Marlis, she's too experienced for that. Besides, it doesn't take much. A little eye shadow, a little something on her lips - and she can go to the mailbox with a clear conscience, even after a night of heavy thinking.

Mark can stay as he is, just take a jacket with him, it can get chilly in the evening, and Marlis doesn't know how long it will last on the police force.

In case Sisyphus does show up, she deposits the key in the usual hiding place on the gutter.

Marlis takes one of the cabs parked in front of the hotel across the street and tries to explain to the driver that she needs to go to a police station - Tourist Police - to a police where they speak English or, even better, German. The driver is curious: he wants to know what is going on, but Marlis is not in the mood to tell, but asks if there was an accident nearby.

Accidents happen every day and people don't talk about it because it's either not worth talking about or talking doesn't bring the dead back to life: "In India, traffic very dangerous."

Marlis has no desire to chat, even if the cab driver chattily wants to satisfy his curiosity. She has other problems: Mark is whining in the back seat, and in her head she is already formulating the sentences she will say at the police station. She plays through the entire conversation, including possible queries and her explanations. It's always good to be prepared.

That way, nothing can slip away, you make fewer mistakes.

Maybe the cab ride seems so long to her because of her inner restlessness. It's only a third of the distance to the airport, about half an hour's drive, but it's night and the driver is asking stupid questions, the oncoming traffic is blinding, and then there are these breakneck overtaking maneuvers.

In Panjim, the driver stops a hundred meters away from the police station. It seems as if he wants to have nothing to do with this strangely excited but silent woman. But perhaps he has only had his experiences with the institutions. He wants to negotiate the waiting time, but Marlis presses a thousand rupees into his hand: "Just wait here."

She was expecting a police station and is already annoyed with herself again: How can you think of a station like the Zurich city police in India!

What she finds is a fenced-in two-story building reminiscent of a rundown barracks. At the entrance in a guardhouse sits a disinterested policeman. But that can't deter Marlis - she has her sentences all worked out.

But the man simply waves them through. Inside the building, at a kind of reception desk - a wooden table with a telephone, a chair in front of it and a huge book on it - sits another policeman. Marlis senses that she is in a different part of India than on the beach or in Anjuna. The tone is bored, but harsher.

Sisyphus' drinking buddy used to say, "Indians are like children."

This is not the case here.

"How can I help you?"

"My husband has been missing since the afternoon."

"Disappeared?"

"He went shopping and never came back."

"Shopping? Where?"

"Candolim."

"What hotel are you staying at?"

"We don't stay in a hotel, we have an apartment from private."

"Private." The policeman pronounces it as if living privately is suspicious, then shakes his head and makes a quick phone call.

"Passports, please."

Marlis has to show her passport and Mark's child ID, all data are entered into the book, then the policeman leads her into a small room and tells her to wait.

Mark finds the surroundings exciting and Marlis has trouble keeping him quiet - he asks so many questions and she has no answers: like where is this river that is on a yellowed print from the tourist office, or what is a de-tox clinic.

The waiting gets on Marlis' nerves, and anger creeps over her fears that have been pushed away. An indignation that she is being kept waiting, that she is not being taken care of.

After ten minutes, which seem endless to Marlis, a more senior policeman enters the room, judging by his clothes. He sits down on the other side of the table and Marlis senses that it annoys

him to be sitting in this room and not in front of the TV or with his colleagues or wherever.

She suspects that this will not be a usual Indian chat: "First time in India", "first time in Goa" and so on - something inside her knows that she is annoying, even more that she is unwanted.

"So. Your husband disappeared. When?"

"This afternoon, he went shopping and never came back."

"Shopping?"

"Yes, with the scooter."

"How long have you been in Goa? "

"Ten days."

"Can I see your tickets please! "

The tickets. Marlis didn't think of that. The tickets are in the apartment. But what do the tickets have to do with the missing Sisyphus?

"The tickets are in the apartment."

"But you have your husband's ID with you?"

Marlis gets angry.

"He's got that on him, he rode the scooter after all."

"It's not a given. Why would he take the ID with him if he was just going shopping. I never take my ID with me to go shopping."

"Where did you rent the scooter?"

"In a little store around the corner from where we live."

"What's the name of the store?"

"I don't know. Just one of those small stores. What are you getting at? I want to report my husband missing."

"Take it easy. Just because your husband doesn't come back from shopping doesn't mean he's missing. Maybe he went to another beach. Maybe he went on a trip."

"But I tried calling him. Four times and text."

"Maybe he turned off his phone, or the battery died".

Marlis has the feeling that the policeman is giving her a run for her money.

She feels a pressure in her lower abdomen that begins to expand. She knows this feeling. It is the same as when her father used to run up her mother and how he used to run her up and how Sisyphus used to run her up.

Not being taken seriously makes Marlis angry. Even more, the policeman seems to want to reassure her. But no one in this world needs to reassure Marlis. After all, she is not upset, but is justifiably worried. Nor does anyone need to reassure Marlis, because of course life is dangerous and she knows only too well how things can end.

This ignorant denial is exasperating.

Marlis gets angry, but doesn't let on.

Always remain polite.

She feels her muscles tense and indignation inflate her belly, wanting to expand. Like a balloon before bursting.

But Marlis has also learned to pull herself together and swallow anger.

That's exactly what she's doing now. She pulls herself together and smiles.

"Where do you think," the policeman turned to Mark, "where do you think your father is?"

The fact that he is now dragging Mark in outrages Marlis, and she realizes that her tactic of smilingly eating into herself is getting her nowhere.

She gets direct: "Are you going to take a charge or not?"

The policeman says nothing, because what should be: no report of an accident with a foreigner, no drowned man and no tiger from the hinterland that has ventured near the beach. Only men who drink too much and girls who get the wrong drugs.

"Your husband will show up. Tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?"

"Maybe he went somewhere and then it got dark. That's dangerous on the roads. Too dangerous to drive back."

"Something happened."

"Tell me what happened."

"I don't know."

"Well, come back when you know."

"Aren't you going to take a report?"

"No. Why."

"My husband is gone."

"I know, but he'll show up again, too." And to Mark, "Not true, your father will be back tomorrow."

Mark nods and Marlis could smack him for that. She never has before, but now she could, and the fact that she doesn't is only because the policeman has gotten up in the meantime and is signaling that he doesn't feel like dealing with this overexcited European and her runaway husband anymore.

"Come back tomorrow if your husband hasn't shown up by then."

"No."

"No?"

"I want to place an ad now."

"Good woman: you will now go home and sleep."

Now the balloon in Marli's stomach expands, she doesn't want to be fobbed off like that. She doesn't get loud, but determined, and then she says something about the consulate. Mark must have sensed her change, because he starts to cry, which makes the policeman even angrier. But sensing that Marlis will not leave the police station unfinished, he trudges out of the room, only to reappear a few minutes later with the cab driver in tow.

"Tell this woman that if she does not leave immediately, I will arrest her."

Marlis does not understand why he brought the driver. Certainly not to translate, because he speaks worse English than the policeman.

"Take this woman away immediately. I have other things to do than take care of missing men." Then he adds something in Hindi and leaves the room. It was probably a crude curse - not meant for sensitive female ears.

The cab driver has no choice but to plead with Marlis to come along and not make any more trouble. She understands only half of what he says, but she senses that it must be both urgent and unpleasant for the driver. She hesitates briefly, then follows him, who leaves the police station, drenched in sweat but visibly relieved. The crying Mark hangs on to her hand. For him, it has long been too much.

They get into the cab. Shortly after leaving Panjim, Marlis tears open the cigarette pack and lights a cigarette.

"No smoking. Madame."

Marlis stubs out the cigarette on the floor and throws it out the window.

After about thirty seconds, however, she realizes that she doesn't want to put up with that and hisses at the driver to pull over. He doesn't know what happens to him when Marlis' ball bursts in his stomach and within seconds this pretty blonde woman turns into the raging goddess Kali.

He is so surprised by this energy that he slams on the brakes.

Marlis is no less startled. Not about the abrupt stop, but rather about herself. Mark doesn't dare say anything either, he has never seen his mother like this before.

"Just five minutes."

Marlis pulls open the door and lights a new cigarette next to the car. She smokes slowly, and despite the rising slight nausea, she feels everything relax inside her.

When she returns and gets back in, Mark sobs, "Daddy's not coming! "

Now Marlis' control also breaks down and tears well up in her eyes. She snaps at the driver one last time, "Home."

Then she takes Mark in her arms and they both cry softly.

She had a plan, it failed. It broke miserably, now it needs a new one. She has to get herself under control again, because otherwise the thought might penetrate, even if only slowly, that the policeman might be right after all and Sisyphus will turn up again tomorrow.

Such thoughts are dangerous, they are connected with questions, considerations and even more feelings; there it is better to have inner certainties: Sisyphus does not go - Sisyphus is dead.

Marlis is the second-born. At home, she tried to muddle through and took responsibility for everything and everyone - but especially for her mother. Her sister, three years older, rebelled and fled early. At the age of sixteen, she moved into a shared flat for young people. Not voluntarily, but under pressure from a judge who knew her mother and therefore let mercy prevail. It was not hashish, it was cocaine.

So Marlis took on the role of saving the family honor and bringing it into the next generation. After all, one had to help the parents sweep everything unspoken under the carpet.

While Marlis' sister later became a singer in changing rock bands, it was always clear to Marlis that she would take up her mother's profession, primary school teacher. Later, when she married the IT' guy Sisyphus, it was a disaster for her mother. You don't choose a man because he smiles so nicely and is courteous, there has to be more to it than that. Besides, he had a German father.

Mark was born after four years of marriage and turned ten three months ago. He is a bully who takes after his father. Whereby Sisyphus is actually not a bully. Marlis and Sisyphus had the thought several times that Mark had ADHD, but it always passed.

Sisyphus thinks these are growth phases, and as long as he doesn't get stuck in school or do anything real, they ignore his antics. Sisyphus more than Marlis, because their framework for

behavioral conspicuity is narrower.

From Mark's point of view, Mom often loses her nerve and drives everyone crazy with her posturing. Deep down, Mark is convinced: Dad is strong and would never leave him. Yet he is now beginning to have doubts.

"When is Dad coming back?"

But before Marlis can even think of a child-friendly answer, her cell phone rings and she sees her mother's number.

First Mark, now her mother! And all kinds of questions to which she has no answers. Marlis' mother has never called on vacation, and she is the last person she wants to talk to now. Marlis pushes her away, not without guilt.

Sisyphus has disappeared.

The police do not want to help her.

And now her mother.

Slowly, things start to go over Marlis' head, and she can no longer avoid the thought: What if the policeman is right?

Men more often leave hysterical women with their children - but Sisyphus?

Could she be wrong?

Marlis has to lie down and close her eyes for a moment. She needs to find a clear thought, but how is that supposed to work when a typhoon is raging in her head?

Breathe calmly, as she learned in yoga, and then first put Mark to bed.

He wants to sleep with her, of course, but she can't use that now any more than her mother can.

Smoke a cigarette on the balcony.

And then?

Act. Once again, the thought calms her.

Block the credit cards.

It's easy to do, because the number of the card service is written on the back of the card and the hotline is manned around the clock. Marlis notices how she becomes aggressive while on hold - uncontrollably aggressive.

Breathe into a relaxed belly. Stay calm, don't forget anything. Answer the safety questions carefully and don't let anything show.

After Sisyphus' cards are blocked, Marlis calls the embassy, but there is an answering machine.

So once again the credit card company.

Again the waiting loop.

She asked if there were any withdrawals.

Nothing.

However, she is assured that she will be called back should the card be used.

Marlis lights another cigarette.

Outside the apartment, dogs are yapping. India - always loud, much too loud - even at night, and then these power outages. Now it pushes out of her, she begins to sob unrestrainedly. She doesn't know what about, but it seems that her organization, her control, her breathing have reached a limit. Even a cigarette doesn't help anymore.

She lies down on the bed, curls up and falls into a strange state between tension and letting go. It's not sleeping, it's dozing off. Again and again she wakes up, only to find that she can't sleep, and then her eyes fall shut again.

A sense of the inevitable creeps over her, like being led to execution the next day.

Those terrible crows - just before dawn.

They wake Marlis, although she hasn't really been asleep. Rather, she still smoked half the pack of cigarettes - always one in between, and then got annoyed that there was no beer in the fridge, although normally, when Sisyphus is there, there is always beer in the fridge. She drank water and smoked some more and didn't know what to do, because she called everyone she could.

At least Mark fell asleep at three in the morning and is still asleep.

Marlis makes a plan for the day: phone call to the embassy, again to the police. She resolves not to be put off this time. And then the inevitable: Call her mother back.

She still believes in an accident, at least she wants to believe in it. It is the only way she can maintain her image: Sisyphus is reliable, and if he came now - he might hear something from her.

It's good to have a daily schedule, it organizes your thoughts. Then they don't race through the head like billiard balls gone wild. She nods off once more. At ten o'clock, Mark wakes her by crawling under her covers. She takes him in her arms and feels that his pants are damp.

He wet the bed.

Under normal circumstances, she would instantly put him in the shower and strip the bed; only

right now she has no energy, and it seems Mark has no energy to be ashamed either.

Things begin to shake inside Marlis. She realizes that things will never be the same again. This realization is independent of whether Sisyphus is dead, whether something terrible has happened, or whether he has left her.

What she realizes is much bigger and goes beyond all that: there is no going back. She senses that even if Sisyphus were to come home stone drunk now, it will never be the same again.

Slowly, other questions emerge: Is Sisyphus perhaps not so reliable after all?

Maybe not everything was so good after all?

Until now, the past seemed unchangeable to Marlis, but now, with what has happened, she will have to reevaluate that past, and it is precisely this that makes her feelings take on a slightly hysterical hue again.

The cell phone rings, Marlis sees a Swiss number. The whole program runs in her head: the embassy. No, they would have an Indian number - the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the cantonal police, whoever.

It picks up. It's the credit card company. A man tells her matter-of-factly that Sisyphus' credit cards have been activated again and that he made a withdrawal at 9:25 this morning. Where Sisyphus called from and where the last withdrawal was made, the man does not say.

He just says, "Calm down, your husband seems to be alive, otherwise he couldn't have called us."

"And if someone put a gun to his head?; maybe he was kidnapped after all, even if she can't believe it herself.

"Your husband's credentials were impeccable and certainly without any outside influence."

Marlis asks and begs, but the husband shrugs it off. For him, it seems to be a marital crisis. The wife cancels her husband's credit cards because he doesn't come back from fetching bread.

She has only herself to blame for that.

This is really not part of the business of card companies. Where would we end up if everyone could simply block everyone's credit cards!

Yesterday, with the policeman, Marlis still felt a certain warmth, even if he was angry at the end and let her feel how annoying she was. With the credit card company employee, she registers distant coldness. An embarrassing not wanting to get involved: discreet, cold-ass Swiss politeness.

Sisyphus lives.

But that means that something worse than any imaginable catastrophe has happened - otherwise he would be here and everything would be fine. Marlis looks to see if she has missed anything on her phone. But there's nothing - no SMS from Sisyphus, no attempt to call, nothing on the mobile box.

The initial wobbling of their certainties turns into a landslide - huge and unstoppable, but at a reduced speed. Thinking loses momentum. It is like when cream becomes thick after being whipped.

Mark has woken up and asks if Dad is back.

"No. And I don't know where he is either," Marlis answers aggressively, because she doesn't yet dare say that Dad has run away.

However, it can't have been as good as she always thought when someone suddenly runs away. She wonders what she actually knows about Sisyphus.

Apparently little. Much too little.

Marlis stares out the window.

Her nicely structured outline of the day has disintegrated, and what's coming up now can't be planned. She will have to talk to Mark. She'll have to tell him that Dad probably won't be back anytime soon.

She will also have to call her mother, because she knows that she will not let go. Her mother's program of worries is even more extensive than her own.

Marlis can't go to the beach either - she might meet someone who would ask questions. Questions to which she has no answers.

What should she do about her yoga class - the only reason she's here?

She can't say that her husband ran away.

An accident would be tragic, but far less complicated than this situation.

Of course, they talked about men yesterday, but it was just talk, and besides, Sisyphus was only on the sidelines. That's no reason to run away. But then she remembers that Sisyphus had already left at that point.

His disappearance must have other causes.

Marlis cannot grasp a thought, everything slips away from her. She can't eat breakfast - she doesn't even like to make herself a coffee. She has to get out of here, but somewhere where she doesn't know anyone.

She drives with Mark to the next town, to a restaurant. The boy has to eat something after all,

and so Mark gets the pizza he missed out on last night.

She can't hide forever and avoid everyone, if only because of Mark.

Marlis thinks that if it were only possible to talk to Sisyphus, if there were communication, a wire, she would talk him out of this whim. She would convince him that running away, escaping, is not a solution. If only he would answer.

Why did he leave in the first place?

But instead of setting out to find answers, this question spurs the other part in Marlis.

The aggressive, the grumpy Marlis, the one who doesn't want to let her vacation be spoiled. The decision-maker who doesn't let herself be beaten down, certainly not by Sisyphus. And this Marlis decides that she won't fly back before the scheduled date, besides, there are only four days left.

Could she change the flight at all?

But what is she worrying about others again?

She will be at the airport on time. Sisyphus - he has to take care of himself, or his flight will be forfeited. She has other things to do now. The one who leaves can also take care of his flight home.

Later today she will organize a morning care for Mark, she will make a good deal with a cab driver for the rides to Anjuna and tomorrow she will be back in her yoga class.

She will not answer any questions, not even those of her mother. Shards belong to be cleared away, then swept up and something new begins. In general: Her life is none of the others' business.

Marlis will play a role, she will play the role of the strong one, the doer, she will play exactly the role she knows. Behind the scenes, however, and Marlis senses this, this role will bring her to her knees this time. Something inside her suspects that she will not receive any news from Sisyphus any time soon.

Nor will she tell her mother that Sisyphus is gone, although she knows full well that she will hear, just from the undertone of her voice, that something is wrong. Something more terrible than carrying Sisyphus to the grave.

And then there's Mark. Apparently he is the only one who feels something.

Inwardly he is grieving, outwardly he is aggressive. He has thrown sand at a dog and tripped an unknown child in passing. His anger is uncontrolled, it has no direction, because he does not master the defense mechanisms of adults, planning and control.

He misses his father, but even more Mark misses that mother and father are there for each other and for him.

But even Marlis' restraint has a limit, and despite the most persistent control, doubts arise.

Was their world what it seemed?

Hasn't she believed what she wanted to believe for too long, hiding behind conventions and images of a good marriage?

Didn't she give up her identity, herself, long before she got married?

Important questions, and yet they have to wait, because Marlis decides to stand firm and not at all let Sisyphus' rash action lead her to her own rash actions.

Sisyphus, for his part, knows that he is a coward. This grueling feeling does not disappear even after the fourth can of beer he drinks in his shabby room.

He's a whiner.

He could have drunk even more, but that in turn would only increase the hangover the next morning. He misses the fan and the mosquito net, and the dripping faucet also gets on his nerves. Sisyphus sweats, rolls around in bed and has given up trying to calm himself down by masturbating.

Even that no longer helps.

His restless mind searches for solutions that could free him from his self-created dilemma. But whatever occurs to him, he immediately rejects it, because it would either lead back to Marlis or categorically and forever rule out a return home.

He is in a quandary and feels like a boxer who clutches his opponent so as not to have to fight: He avoids the exchange of blows because the fear of striking balances out with the fear of taking it.

Sisyphus is trapped in either-or. And the harder the vice of his thoughts grips, the more he loses sight of the fact that there could also be a both/and. That it would be possible to return to his family and still keep his newly won freedom.

The comfortable Sisyphus cannot actually see this both/and, because it presupposes another, a courageous Sisyphus. One who steps into the ring and refuses no fight. A Sisyphus who is willing to be hurt and scarred. A Sisyphus who takes real responsibility: Not for others, even the old Sisyphus can do that, but for himself.

At the moment, however, fear reigns supreme, and Sisyphus fears nothing more than the consequences of his pressing the reset button. He can't turn himself in. Not yet. He knows that the first punch from his invisible attacker would strike him down mercilessly. Deep in the mire of his

unconscious, Sisyphus suspects that his adversary is neither Marlis nor Heinrich nor his mother nor whoever is outside of him. The enemy sits within him, and he intuitively senses: only by confronting this demon will he find peace.

Whatever it is.

Sisyphus is far from that at the moment, rather he is the man on the wire and hangs on a remote control on which the buttons for left and right are missing. There is only forward and backward. And directly in front of and behind him, insurmountable obstacles seem to prevent any movement.

Well after midnight, Sisyphus falls into a fitful sleep and has a nightmare.

It is about nothing more and nothing less than saving the world. He has to meet a man who has the solution in a foreign city, and in order for him to get there, he has been subjected to flight training.

It's an amazing feeling to fly and see the world from above. To fly himself, without any aids. However, he must not have learned enough, because suddenly he crashes.

There is no impact, but the image changes and he is in an elevator, which does not go up and down, but sideways.

Suddenly he gets stuck, and the house begins to sway. Threateningly. Then the elevator plunges into the bottomless pit at breakneck speed.

There is Heinrich.

He looks down the elevator shaft from above, and Sisyphus is a little boy and scared. When he wants to call for his father, he can't get a word out, and the elevator has also disappeared in the meantime.

Sisyphus races into the depths in free fall.

Drenched in sweat and without orientation, he wakes up.

It is dark, and at first he thinks he is at home in Zurich. But quickly the image fades and is overlaid by something foreign.

India. Goa.

Where exactly is he?

Sisyphus looks around and realizes that he is not in the apartment with Marlis and Mark. A little more awake, he realizes that he is lying in a dirty cubbyhole in Arambol, because he fled his marriage yesterday, for reasons unknown to him at that moment.

It is the first time that he realizes, still drowsy but conscious, that he has broken out and left a part of his life behind. He is scared beyond measure and hopes that he is in a lucid dream; that he

is lucid dreaming.

In a few seconds he will wake up next to Marlis in Zurich and everything will be as usual.

But Sisyphus does not wake up, because this is not a dream and it is not an imagination, like the tsunami.

It seems reality: Sisyphus has left his family and is on the run.

But what is the difference between a dream and reality?

As a child, Sisyphus often had the feeling that he was not living in the real world. He perceived his environment as artificial and himself as a human guinea pig in a labyrinth. He expected the door to suddenly open, the experimenter to come in and enlighten him, or the experiment to be stopped. But nothing happened. Sisyphus neither woke up from a dream nor was the supposed maze explained to him.

Rather, he had to come to terms with living behind a strange and seemingly impenetrable veil. He now feels it again.

Couldn't it be that all this is a well-camouflaged experimental setup and Marlis, Mark, his work colleagues and everything around him are just variable parameters to test his reaction to the environment under different circumstances?

Sisyphus a lab rat?

He energetically pushes the thought aside. Nevertheless, the feeling of a slight cloudiness that blocks the view of the real thing stubbornly remains.

In addition, he has a coated tongue, and the more his senses return, the worse he feels: He smells unpleasant and at the same time has no desire to shower. Too tedious. Besides, he has nothing to change into.

The beach in front of the hut is gray, drab and littered with the remains of the evening's fires, PET bottles, butts, garbage.

Even the sea has retreated. It laps listlessly, and over everything lies a light but persistent haze that even a merciless sun will not burn away.

Like a beach dog in foreign territory, Sisyphus creeps across the sand before turning into the main street. He passes closed stores and bars and finds an ATM.

He went to get money, but receives a message that his card is not accepted and that he should contact his bank.

What did Sisyphus expect?

That he just disappears and Marlis takes it for granted?

Sisyphus curses.

He wants a toothbrush and shaving stuff, he needs underwear and shower gel.

He calls the card service and is stung to learn that Marlis has had the cards temporarily blocked. Sisyphus has to identify himself with passwords and questions until he is assured that he can withdraw money again. After all, the card is in his name, even if they are partner cards.

With the employee's admonition to report to his wife, the conversation ends.

But what would he tell Marlis if he called?

I come back?

I left you?

He himself has no idea what he wants.

He can't call, it's not working. Not yet.

By standing up, Sisyphus hoped to have left behind the pressure of either-or decisions. But he was wrong, because every admonition from outside increases the internal pressure. The matter of the credit cards has tightened the bolts and, in addition to a good portion of anger, has also made Sisyphus' hands clammy.

He is restless, roams aimlessly, and feels like a predator that has escaped its cage but never learned to hunt or otherwise feed.

He's also at war with shopping.

He hates how Marlis pulls him over markets and can't decide. He hates how he runs after her with an annoyed look on his face. He has observed that when shopping, all the men trot along behind their wives, and he wonders why the men don't get together and have a beer while their wives collect impressions and superfluous objects.

But men don't talk about that even with their best friends; instead, they exchange pitying looks in solidarity at shopping malls.

Besides, the women want the men to be there. Probably to present their prey, like a cat drags dead mice.

Sisyphus doesn't want to go shopping, he wants to get something: underpants, T-shirt, swimming trunks, toothpaste.

The stores offer almost everything: chillums, home-burned CDs and DVDs, clothes for women - but no underwear for Sisyphus.

Underwear is bought in the market in India.

He also has a new companion: his guilty conscience. Every time Sisyphus enters a store that offers clothes or jewelry, he thinks of Marlis. They are not pleasant memories, but they are flashbacks that could finally burst the rivets of his moral consciousness.

Anyone, friend or stranger, who told him his story, Sisyphus would wash his head. He would be outraged by such impudence.

After more than an hour, Sisyphus still has no underwear. Instead, he buys three unfashionable but practical Indian swimming trunks.

The haggling and the touts get on his nerves. In general, everything bothers him at the moment: the sun, other people and his inner jury, which is slowly wearing him down.

Despite an extensive breakfast in a beach bar, they are increasingly breathing down his neck. No coffee will help. It doesn't even help to think about beer in the morning.

Sisyphus immediately turned off his phone after calling the card company, and now he is immensely afraid to turn it on. He still dreads Marlis' calls. It doesn't occur to Sisyphus that Marlis has realized that he has run away and that she has other things to do at the moment than phone after her fugitive husband.

He also hasn't showered yet, because the thought of going back to his dingy room and staring at the ceiling alone with no distractions scares him.

It's better to sit in a beach bar and pass the time drinking coffee, staring at yourself and cleaning your sunglasses.

With his cheap shopping bags, sweaty, unshaven and overtired, he looks not unlike a permanent stoner stuck in India. An image that Sisyphus would be ashamed of in Zurich. At the moment, however, he is living it unabashedly.

"Hey, are you from Germany too?"

"Switzerland."

The guy must have been sitting near him for a while, but Sisyphus is only now consciously noticing him. Sun-bleached hair, three-day beard and the usual Goa hippie look. Compared to him, he looks beachy attractive. In California, he could be a surfer or a keeper in a bar where the women not only sip their drinks but also cling to his smile.

"You look like shit."

"Thank you."

With a gesture, the other asks if he can sit at Sisyphus' table, and when he nods, he extends his

hand to him.

"Shiva."

"Sisyphus."

"Holy shit, who gave you that name? Isn't that the guy who rolls a rock up a hill, and almost gets to the top, he slips and the rock rolls back down?"

"Is marble, but your name is not better. Shiva like the cartomancer on Swiss television. Do you know him - Mike Shiva?"

"Never heard of him, but I don't have a TV either."

"What does Shiva actually mean? "

"Creator and destroyer. Is an Indian God."

"And what do you create?"

"Joy."

"You can live on that?"

"Sure. Fate means well for me. You have to trust, then everything you need will come to you. "

"Nothing has come to me yet."

"For example, my name came to me. I open a newspaper and there's a picture of Shiva. One of those Indian comic book god pictures. It jumps out at me and that's when I knew that was my name. How did you get Sisyphus? Really stupid name."

"A nickname from colleagues."

"Of no consequence?"

"Not that I know of."

"Have you been here long?"

"Since yesterday."

Sisyphus doesn't know what to make of Shiva and retreats into silence, as he always does when he is unsure. But Shiva is not Marlis and does not give up so easily.

"You're not very talkative."

"Hey. I came from Candolim yesterday. I'm living in quite a hole and this morning my credit card was also blocked. That was just a mistake and now everything is fine again, but I haven't showered, brushed my teeth since yesterday."

"You can tell."

Sisyphus realizes that Shiva will not let up, and that annoys him. On the other hand, he is glad

to have a conversation partner, even if he can't place Shiva.

"So you gave yourself that name?"

"Yes. Before that, my name was Dhyan. The name came from Osho. And before that, Peter. That came from my mother."

When Shiva notices that the name Osho triggers a questioning face, he adds, "Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. The sex guru from Poona. You must have heard of him. The most brilliant enlightened man of the last century. Dhyan means meditation, by the way, but at some point the name didn't fit anymore, so I decided on Shiva."

"Do you live in India?"

"For heaven's sake. You can't live in India. India is good for the soul, but shit for the body. Look at you."

"This is an exception. You know, I was on vacation with a couple and the last week it really hit the fan. She gave him such hell."

"A friend of yours?"

"Good acquaintance. Anyway, he couldn't take it anymore and left for two days. That's when she stuck to me. The whole program: from 'It's all my fault' to 'Get him back!'. But I didn't even know where the guy had gone. Anyway, he shows up again on the third day and they try to reconcile. Then it started all over again. That's when I had to leave."

"That bad?"

"Yes, she finds fault with everything, yet he only came along for her stupid yoga. But nothing fits: The sea is dirty, the food doesn't suit her, everything."

"Alright, if it's your first time here, it can be intense. You're here alone?"

"Yes," Sisyphus lies, "the first time here, the first time in India, and now alone." He laughs and adds, "Well, anyway, the drama's over, I didn't understand why he put up with it for so long anyway."

"Maybe he's addicted? Maybe he loves her? People tell themselves all kinds of things."

"What about you? Are you here alone?"

"Alone, yes, but not lonely. During the day I play with the boys," he points with his head to the beach volleyball players, "and at night with the girls."

As he says this, Shiva looks at Sisyphus with a pitying gaze.

"Would also do you good to open up a little more. Of course, only after you've shaved your

sack."

He laughs, and Sisyphus wonders what kind of funny guy this is. But Sisyphus is also curious, so he follows up.

"That acquaintance who ran away. I understood him, but somehow it was irresponsible. I mean, his girlfriend died a thousand deaths."

"So she didn't die, and besides, everyone is responsible for their own suffering. You can accept your fate, then the cramp stops, or you can fight against it. I mean, his girlfriend probably fought. But what are you worrying about that anyway? Yesterday is yesterday and today is now."

Shiva's world is so simple, thinks Sisyphus. He doesn't take things so seriously: with the boys during the day and with the girls at night. It's that simple - at least that's how it seems. But Sisyphus is interested in one thing: "Do you have children?"

"Yes, a 17-year-old son, but he lives with his mother. A tantric accident - well, maybe lucky."

"Do you see him from time to time?"

"Not often, they live in a commune near Berlin."

"And do you miss him?"

"What does it mean to miss - his soul goes his way and mine goes my way. There is no personal agent, it's all just imagination. But you'll figure that out too. Or explain to me how and why you're coming here right now."

"By scooter from Candolim."

"But why now?"

"I don't know."

"You had an impulse, for sure. Where did the impulse come from?"

"From my thoughts or whatnot."

"But where do your thoughts come from?"

"From my brain."

"How do they get in there?"

Now Sisyphus is at the end of his rope. Such thoughts used to interest him, but he put philosophy aside, at least temporarily, when he graduated from high school and preferred to concentrate on tangible things. Things with which you can earn money and feed a family.

But Shiva continues: "I will explain it to you. The thoughts, everything, comes from the source. We are just biocomputers that implement it. Like hardware and software."

"And who wrote the software?"

"God."

"God? You mean God is a programmer? And we are in the matrix? Watch out, here comes a black cat. Déjà vu."

"Something like that. Go ahead and make fun."

"I'm not making fun of you. I just find the thought strange. But let's say there really is such a thing as the Matrix: Is there then also something outside of it? People who don't live in the Matrix? And anyway, what about Agent Smith?"

"And how you make fun. But: 'I want to tell you why you're here. You're here because you know something. Something you can't explain. But you feel it. You've felt it all your life, that there's something wrong with the world. You don't know what, but it's there. Like a splinter in your head that drives you crazy. That feeling is what brought you to me.'"

"Woww. That was really good."

"But unfortunately not from me. It's by Morpheus from Matrix One. I thought it was so awesome that I memorized it. Always impresses."

"You collect compliments?"

"Do I look like I need this? Besides, it doesn't matter anyway whether you call it the matrix or creation. Call it whatever you want. The greater, the eternal, the source - God. Just that, where the thoughts come from. And now please don't ask where God learned to program or where he gets the ideas he stuffs into your brain."

"I would be interested in the programming language of God."

"You're quite the little scientist. Now I understand why they call you Sisyphus. Ohh, man. You need to get out of your head and into your tail, then a lot of things will take care of themselves. It's all just a game - Shiva dancing Shakti ."

"Shiva dancing Shakti?"

"Yes, the male and female principles are playing on the stage of life, and God is laughing. It's as simple as that. It's called Advaita Vedanta, but if you want to know more, you'll have to Google it."

"That bugs you when people get to the bottom of things."

"No. But things are much simpler than your mind makes you believe. God wants to play. And that's why this guy left his girlfriend and then came back after all. That's why my son is with his mother, who is getting fucked by this stupid commie guru right now. And that's exactly why we

met here. Isn't that what the divine source is doing wonderfully?"

Sisyphus finds the idea of an all-controlling source so absurd that he inquires, "Isn't that too simple? There is one source and no one is responsible anymore?"

"You don't have to make it easy on yourself - Siddharta, for example."

"The book by Hermann Hesse?"

"The one who later became Buddha: Had a huge palace. Goods, wife and children - and suddenly, one morning, he gets up and decides to become an ascetic. So he sneaks out of the palace, leaves everything behind, and a few years later becomes enlightened. Do you think he was thinking? If he had thought long and hard, he probably never would have left - with all his riches. No, it happened in a jiffy and the source had already created a Buddha."

Sisyphus hangs on another point in the conversation, "Are you jealous of that guy in Berlin? That almost sounded like it."

"No, I am not jealous. But as long as I am not enlightened, it scratches my ego. It doesn't matter. By the way, I'm meeting two exciting girls at Magic Park this afternoon. Why don't you come along?"

And when Sisyphus hesitates, Shiva adds with a wink, "Meet me here in three hours, you can follow behind me then. You'll like them, starved as you are."

Sisyphus is not yet ready, something else is working in him: "I have to ask something about the source. So if the source, matrix, fate or God determines everything, then there is no responsibility. I mean, then everyone can do what he wants."

"He will do what the source wants, because he can't do anything else, the thoughts come from the source."

"So now when one kills another."

"Then he goes to jail for it. That's his path in life."

"But he couldn't have made a different decision, he couldn't have said I'm going to pull myself together and not kill this guy?"

"No, if jail is his destiny."

"So in your opinion, there's nothing we can do? Nothing at all?"

"But, we can be content and accept our fate with an open heart: 'For is it not better to live with an open aching heart than to die with a closed one?' Another saying that has stuck with me."

"No personal responsibility."

"No responsibility and no blame."

"Then I've probably done some things wrong, because I do worry about it."

"Not you. The source makes the thoughts: through you. That is also part of it. So, my friend, let the thoughts be thoughts. I'll see you in three hours. And wash up first."

Shiva gets up and leaves.

He leaves behind a confused Sisyphus, who was able to follow the words and contexts, but for whom much was too superficial.

There are some things he has to think about longer, because it can't be that simple: He leaves Marlis because he gets an impulse from the source - a divine command. And also his feelings of guilt and his memories should have nothing to do with him, but come from this obscure source?

This would exonerate him, but it is far too simple: man a bio-computer implementing divine input.

What then about the interface between what is experienced, i.e. stored memories, and new commands?

How can it be that the past has no influence on our current actions?

What is the meaning of morality, conscience and self-knowledge?

Shiva would probably say that this was a neural network whose exact function he unfortunately could not explain in detail. Then he would conceal his refusal to go into depth with a clever, memorized saying. He remains superficial, babbles and dusts himself off.

Sisyphus is sure that it cannot be as simple as Shiva explains.

His job, for example: Sisyphus got it because he studied before, and he could study only because he took his Matura before. Shiva would say that this was all planned by the source from long hand. So to speak from the big bang.

Sisyphus ponders.

He must find a situation in which he demonstrably, and with the correctness of a Swiss computer scientist, made a decision of his own free will: willingly, consciously, and with responsibility for all future consequences.

Such an investigation takes time.

Before that, however, he will shave and shower, he will put on his newly acquired Indian clothes, and then, before meeting with Shiva, he will do a little Googling: Advaita Vedanta, Siddharta, Buddha as well as enlightenment. Sisyphus will not look for a commune near Berlin, that is Shiva's private business, and just as he wishes people to stay out of his life, so he is discreet with others.

Sisyphus' interests may have shifted after school, away from literature and philosophy and toward practical computer science, but he is not stupid. And he certainly doesn't want to be taken for a fool.

This Shiva has a heavy tendency towards esotericism, just like Marlis has developed in the last years. However, Shiva can explain some things, while Marlis only talks about her feelings, intuition and cosmic vibrations.

Good thing there are Internet cafés and Wikipedia. Besides, Sisyphus has become curious, and it just takes a little time for his mind to get back up to full speed.

He once wrote a year-long paper on the French existentialists. It was not about enlightenment, but about the responsibility of the individual for his actions and towards the world.

He is sure that he will get to the bottom of this Shiva.

To avoid any misunderstanding, Sisyphus did not become a spiritual seeker through the brief encounter with Shiva. What aroused his curiosity has very practical causes: the jaws of his inner vice, which press brutally on his guilty conscience.

But doesn't every aspiration have quite banal reasons?

The fear of death or the search for the greater that holds the fabric of the world together and determines its course?

Does not every search, whether spiritual or strictly scientific, ultimately have very private causes, even if it is only the need to get a little more certainty about the future?

The more we think we understand, the more uncertainty fades from our lives. We are then convinced that we can control at least a small part of our environment. And if that doesn't work, we at least have seemingly logical explanations at hand.

Sisyphus sees it like this: If there really is, as Shiva says, an all-controlling source or God and everything is predetermined by this, then he does not need to have any feelings of guilt towards Marlis and Mark.

He then couldn't help but get on his scooter and take off. However, Marlis then couldn't help but torment him with her nagging. And his conscience, which is currently breathing down his neck, then also bubbles up from this obscure source.

There is no responsibility, no guilt, but also no pride in personal achievements. Man is a cosmic plaything and at the mercy of its fates, without a chance to see through the network. Everything is predetermined, every atom in the universe knows exactly which place it has to take at which time.

And until it is called, it plays hide and seek with the other atoms. Just as Shiva plays with the boys during the day and with the girls at night.

Everything is in an uncontrolled movement and at the same time rigid and fixed, otherwise there would be no predetermination.

Who now discovers a contradiction, he has not understood the big whole, God, Advaita Vedanta, quantum physics and what else there is. He is ignorant and has both no faith and no overview.

This is where the enlightened ones, ascended masters and gurus come in. Those who have seen through how everything works.

In his research, Sisyphus comes across much that he files away under humbug and charlatany. And the tangible, what remains, disintegrates once again into two directions, between which, however, an extremely fluid border runs.

There are the enlightened ones, which refer to God, an eternal source, the now, or generally the great or creative principle. They are the ones on whom Shiva's ideas are based. Sisyphus calls them the Matrix faction. Just as in the movie of the same name, humanity, in their view, lives in a world over which they have no control. There is no free will and therefore no conscious decisions, but only the merciless, sometimes funny program of the source.

This state is called the world of delusion or samsara by the masters. The goal of all human striving is a serene detachment, nirvana: to be free from all attachments, desires and wishful thinking.

This does not change anything in everyday life, even in Nirvana all thoughts and impulses come from the source.

The only difference between a seeker and a knower, therefore, is that the sage knows that he is externally controlled, while the seeker believes that he has a will of his own.

It also has no effect on daily life. An enlightened person will go to the refrigerator when he is hungry and take an aspirin when he has a headache. The only difference between him and a non-enlightened person is that he no longer worries about this, but follows his inner impulses without questioning his actions. Sometimes enthusiastically, sometimes stoically, but always without guilt or pride. After all, he is not the doer, but has recognized that he is Pinocchio and something greater is controlling him.

For Sisyphus, this is not only stupid, but absurd.

Why, he wonders, should any man give up his self-determination and freedom?

And they do so of their own free will, while millions of other people around the world struggle for precisely this freedom.

But it gets even better, because there is a second group of enlightened people.

It assumes that the world as we perceive it is created in our minds and that we know nothing at all about the real world outside of us. Everything is imagination and illusion and the goal is to realize that we ourselves are the creators of the world and thus of all suffering and pleasure.

After all, once we realize this, we can change it. We could then, instead of persevering in a bad life, simply change to a good, uplifting one. So to speak, when we no longer like the current movie, we could simply go from one movie theater to another.

For these enlightened ones, we bear full responsibility for everything that surrounds us, even more: we create it. Ergo, we also bear the responsibility for our suffering.

That may work alone in the Himalayas, Sisyphus thinks, but never ever with other people, certainly not with Marlis.

And most importantly, tell that to a group of refugees who are currently on their way across the savannah to an overcrowded United Nations camp, while bandits and lions prowl around them in the night and two more children died just yesterday.

If it were that simple, Sisyphus is sure, he would immediately create a peaceful and just world in his mind.

What both groups have in common is that the gurus seem to know exactly what is right and wrong, with most going beyond that and claiming that there is no right and wrong at all.

For them, there is only one now.

And no matter what the nature of this now is, it is the only real moment.

The past has passed and thus become a memory and the future has not yet happened.

This now is also called eternity or timelessness. It is the momentary instant, and the more unreservedly and sensually it is perceived, the more authentically the current experience, the so-called being, is said to permeate one. Of course, in these moments there is no valuation, no right or wrong.

Every moment is the way it is. It is not changeable, but pure delicious being.

That sounds great, but it also has a downside.

After all, if this now does not suit someone, it is still to be endured. Without grumbling and the usual resistance that people have when things don't go as they would like.

From silent and indifferent endurance, it should then no longer be a long way to total devotion,

dissolution and enlightenment. Here, however, it became too much for Sisyphus and he did not read on.

Surprisingly, Sisyphus was no stranger to the basic thought processes of this samsara-nirvana enlightenment philosophy. However, for him most of it so far had more to do with science fiction and virtual worlds than with spirituality.

With the colleague who recommended the Swiss Chalet in Angeles City to him, he used to celebrate science fiction movie nights and, in addition to joints, they'd smoke just about everything from eXistenZ to "Nirvana - Hunt in Cyberspace," "Dark City" to the 70s classic "World on the Wire. Then they grabbed their consoles and battled each other in virtual worlds.

When Marlis came into his life, Sisyphus said goodbye to what she called these infantile boys' nights. His colleague, on the other hand, developed into a semi-professional gamer. He now weighs a hundred and forty kilos, has no girlfriend, but flies to Thailand or the Philippines once a year. And of course to the weirdest gamer and hacker events. Except for the weight, it's a life that Sisyphus could also imagine.

But Sisyphus does not believe in an existence as a virtual identity in cyberspace, in the fact that everything is an illusion. He is too firmly anchored in this world for that. Even if this morning, when he awoke from his nightmare, he had brief doubts about this reality.

Sisyphus expected answers from his research on the Internet, but instead it has raised more questions than he had before. He has to realize that spirituality is something much more complex than what Marlis talks about. He could spend days on the question of values alone.

If there is no right or wrong, what is the standard by which he is to measure his actions?

Was it right to leave the family and not contact them since then?

Or maybe he just didn't try hard enough to create a better world for himself, Marlis and Mark?

Here we come full circle to Sisyphus' most important question. Was there a decision he made of his own free will: willingly, consciously, and with responsibility for all future consequences?

Sisyphus senses that an answer will have a fundamental impact on his future actions and self-image.

On how he deals with his escape, whether he returns to Marlis and Mark, and in general, what his future life will be like.

What Sisyphus does not suspect is that he will never find an answer, but that the question will develop into his own personal koan. A question to which there is no logical answer, but which remains paradoxical and meaningless, intended only for the mind to work on it until it collapses in

exhaustion.

At the Internet café, Sisyphus has lost track of time and arrives fifteen minutes late for the meeting with Shiva.

He's already impatient: "You don't keep women waiting. "

You will drive to Arambol Magic Park above the city.

What Sisyphus first notices are the altars scattered throughout the grounds. They are small places of worship built of stacked stones, with floral arrangements bearing images of so-called saints and enlightened beings.

Shiva seems to know his stuff, he makes remarks to one or the other altar as they stroll around the grounds: Ramana Maharshi, Sathya Sai Baba, Osho, who used to be called Bhagwan, Poonja alias Papaji. Almost all the altars are dedicated to men.

One with a picture of a blonde woman catches Sisyphus' eye, "She must have been beautiful when she was young."

"Gangaji. I think she also used to give Satsang in Switzerland."

Satsang. Those funny meetings Marlis wanted to take him to. She told him with shining eyes. In front sits one of these masters, and after a short shared silence, the participants can ask questions.

Sisyphus had waved off.

He couldn't imagine what it would be good for, or why any other person in the world would have helpful answers to his dull life or boring marriage. Marlis promised him, if he came along, not to ask any questions, not to do anything that would compromise him in front of the others, yet he refused.

Then she came up with Deeksha, something that was supposed to work completely without talking - pure energy transfer through hugging.

But this was even more obscure to Sisyphus than the saints answering questions.

Energy transfer through hugging. Positive energy, of course, because there is already enough negative in the world.

That was the end of it, and Sisyphus joked, "First drill a hole in the head, then put a funnel in it, and be careful when filling it. So that none of the valuable energy is lost."

While Marlis had her own doubts about many spiritual trends, Sisyphus' cynicism still hurt her.

The reluctance to open up to the unknown without reservation first rises again during Shiva's

short tour of the grounds in Sisyphus. He doesn't know any of these gurus; besides, saints and spiritual teachers are suspect to him anyway.

It's not his world.

Nevertheless, he observes attentively, and he notices that Shiva's speech and movement have changed. In the beach bar, he had something brash and provocative; here, he seems withdrawn. He speaks quietly and devoutly. Like in a church, Sisyphus thinks.

Only this is not a cathedral or a temple.

It is a dusty barren place above Arambol.

Even the altars have nothing sacred for Sisyphus; rather, they remind him of childish arranged doll's houses, between which enraptured people walk. Shiva may feel at home here, but this is not Sisyphus' place, and even Marlis, he is sure, would find this arbitrary esoteric conglomeration strange.

The girls are already waiting and waving as they both approach.

Shiva approaches them and hugs them long and extensively. It seems as if he had spent a whole life and certainly some nights with them.

This would be too intimate for Sisyphus, and since he looks strange, Shiva says, "Hug compulsion! ", and grins broadly.

Then he introduces Sisyphus, who unsteadily holds out his hand to the girls.

They are open and want to know where Sisyphus comes from, what he does, and he lies as best he can.

The girls laugh a lot and seem so different from Marlis to Sisyphus.

They talk about growth groups they have attended, about tantra, gurus and satsang. Sisyphus has heard about a lot of it, but now it's getting even that when Marlis tried to inspire him, he didn't pay attention or dismissed most of it as esoteric money-making.

He can't have a say.

But even if he could, it wouldn't be his style to make himself out to be a little guru like Shiva and convince the girls what a great lover he was.

When Sisyphus realizes that it's time to contribute something as well, he therefore thinks of nothing better than to note that there is no beer at the Magic Park Café. He wraps it up in a joke. Nevertheless, no one can laugh about it.

Sisyphus must understand that the square is a church after all, and every church has its rules, and one of those rules is that you don't joke about the rules of the church, let alone laugh.

Again, he is off the air.

Later, Shiva and the girls talk about an old man in Mumbai.

Earlier, he is said to have been a banker and made it to the board of the Bank of India. After his retirement, he must have become interested in spirituality and became a disciple of a respected guru. When he died, he succeeded him and has been teaching himself ever since. Seven days a week, always at nine in the morning in his living room in the middle of Mumbai.

Sisyphus is getting light-hearted, because in his world, bankers have something worldly down to earth about them.

He wants to know more about this banker-guru, but apparently no one at the table has been to see him, and the stories Shiva tells are only hearsay. At least they can give him a hint about the name: Ramesh or something like that.

Sisyphus hates half-knowledge. It's just like meetings in his job: you should be in the know about what you're talking about. He gets annoyed and starts subtly provoking: He asks seemingly innocuous questions, any one of which, if you got to the bottom of it, could turn out to be a bomb. But he's lucky, the round dissolves before anyone can get to the bottom of it.

Sisyphus seems to think that Shiva has it in for one of the girls, because he makes a corresponding head movement toward the other as they take their leave.

On the way back, Shiva tells us that he has arranged everything behind the scenes for the evening: Meeting for dinner and then having a tantric ritual with one of the girls in his hut. He grins knowingly.

Sisyphus has no idea what a tantric encounter looks like, but he understands that it is about sex, and that makes all further questions superfluous. Shiva should do what he wants.

Sisyphus will come to dinner and then go his way.

Sex is the last thing on his mind at the moment, and he has to realize how quickly fantasies with other women, once you could live them, pass away.

Instead, Sisyphus can't get the Mumbai banker out of his head, and he wonders what he suddenly has to do with spirituality.

He has the feeling of lying in the recovery room after a long artificial coma, while slowly the memories of the person he was before the anesthesia return. He is still dozing, but bit by bit his mind is also awakening and with it the earlier interest in the big questions of life. The thoughts are fleeting. Nevertheless, a retrospective develops in which the seemingly new ideas lose their

strangeness and increasingly appear like old acquaintances.

For the existentialists, for example, man is nothing other than what he makes himself into. He becomes in his life what he thinks out about himself.

In the beginning, he is a blueprint. However, instead of remaining just a piece of dirt or a rotten apple, man can plan what he wants to be. He can decide whether to write a book, get married, have children, and even whether to run away from that family at some point.

The human being is not at all creator of his universe, but only determines which role he takes in the given world. But for this he carries the sole responsibility.

And since for existentialists all decisions are conscious decisions, this can be quite a tricky business. Depending on how one decides and which role one chooses. In the end, everyone has to bear his burden and endure a sometimes difficult life.

No one can escape their responsibility, and the great challenge is to do what must be done. To recognize it, to act and to stand up for it. Regardless of the consequences and one's own fate. There is no God, no source, no matrix. Also there is no one who says what is right or wrong. There is only self-determined action and the responsibility for the effects, including all unforeseeable consequences.

What Sisyphus doesn't know is that a pillar of Shiva's Matrix-Advaita-Vedanta teachings describes exactly this. It is a passage from the Bhagavad Gita, one of the central scriptures of Hinduism: "You have a right to action, but only to action itself. Not to its fruits. And do not persist in inaction."

Sisyphus must have overlooked this sentence during his research, because compared with the philosophy of existentialism, which consists of merciless self-responsibility, the teachings of the banker-guru seem to him, if alien to life, quite enticing.

It knows no pride and it knows no guilt. There is no personal agent, because all impulses originate from the algorithms of a cosmic program.

And since we can neither change nor influence this, we ultimately have no choice but to accept it in serene cheerfulness. Or, if we rebel inwardly, to endure it.

The more Sisyphus broods, the more the desire to visit this ex-boardroom saint in Mumbai thickens. His lectures should cost nothing and Mumbai is something Sisyphus has always wanted to see.

Dinner is not Sisyphus' cup of tea: tali, a traditional Indian dish, vegetarian trifles, and instead

of a knife and fork, he is given a spoon because he doesn't want to eat with his fingers like the others.

It stops somewhere. Despite the special circumstances, Sisyphus wants to preserve a little, as he calls it, civilized dignity. He does not express this, but politely asks for cutlery.

Shiva and one of the girls say goodbye shortly after dinner.

Sisyphus wants to take another nightcap and stays behind in the beach bar with the other one, who calls herself Prem Mada. He is glad that he is not alone, but on the other hand he doesn't know what to do with the situation.

Prem Mada is pretty, she could almost be his type, but only almost, and especially not now.

Before going to dinner, Sisyphus summoned up all his courage and switched on his cell phone. In his mind, he even toyed with answering a text message from Marlis. He wanted to try out what it was like to follow the source and his spontaneous inner impulses. What he would have written would have depended on Marlis' message. It would have come up because he set out to be an empty mirror. A mirror that reflects exactly what is there. Without evaluating and distorting it.

The empty mirror, he read about it in the Wikipedia article on enlightenment.

What Sisyphus did not consider, however, is that Marlis has not written any new messages since last night.

He switches on the phone and waits. In foreign networks, it can take a while for the messages to arrive.

But even after an hour, nothing has happened. No SMS.

Nothing that the empty mirror could reflect.

But what does an empty mirror do, whose task it is to reflect back images that are as unadulterated as possible, if no one looks into it?

It is superfluous.

This is exactly the feeling that creeps over Sisyphus. Actually, he could be happy and think that the source means well with him by keeping Marlis quiet. But exactly the opposite happens: Sisyphus becomes nervous. Suddenly it would no longer be him who leaves Marlis, but it could have been the other way around.

True, he left, and certainly she was worried at first. But the longer she thinks about it, the more she might come to the conclusion that it is best this way. They had nothing more to say to each other anyway and the sexual frequency has dropped to the lowest level. So what the heck.

In Sisyphus' mind, a parallel universe develops: one in which Marlis is fed up with her couch

potato and takes his escape as an opportunity to try out new things, hungry for life. In this world, Sisyphus can stay where the pepper grows, because Marlis still has some plans for her life.

These thoughts deal Sisyphus such a blow that he never fully recovers from them during the course of the evening.

Now that Shiva and the girl have left, he is waiting for the effects of the gin and tonic he is drinking with Ma Prem Mada, who he knows so far means Ma woman, Prem heart and Mada intoxicating femininity. Also, he has found out that before coming to Arambol, she was in Poona for three months where she attended workshops on self-awareness, personality development or whatever and got her new name.

Again, she used to be a nurse in Cologne and was called Petra Egger, and even earlier she was called von Linhard-Egger, but with her divorce the von Linhard fell away as well.

She laughs: "It's a shame, actually; a little nobility suited me just fine. What about you? Are you married?"

Sisyphus suspected that questions about his person would come at some point. So far, he has been able to cleverly dodge them. But this is a direct, a clear question.

"No, I've never been married. It never happened. Not married, no children," Sisyphus lies and is lucky that his nose doesn't get longer with every lie, as it does with Pinocchio. With his lies, it would already reach Prem Mada's neckline.

Sisyphus tries to distract, and he succeeds: "Say, what, is Shiva actually doing? I mean, when he's not here?"

"I don't know much. I think he has a trailer in Frankfurt."

"An RV?"

"No. It's just an ordinary caravan at the campsite on the Main. He's only in Germany for half a year at a time. There he massages in some practice and the rest of his time he hangs around here."

"Funny life. So completely without any prospects for the future."

"What's yours?"

"I don't know. Working, making money. Just what you do."

"I didn't want to know what you were doing, I was asking about your dreams."

It's getting tight for Sisyphus again, because he hasn't given it a second thought in recent years. Prospects are what the bonus and employee meetings at the end of the year are all about. But Prem Mada means something else, she wants to know about Sisyphus' heart's desires and visions.

He has to think of something, very quickly, and then he should get the hang of Shiva again if

possible.

"Now I'm going to fly to Mumbai first and see Ramesh." Sisyphus is so nervous that he uses the old English name for Mumbai. But he's got his act together and now he has to get back to a question quickly. He who asks, leads.

"Have you known each other longer? Shiva and you?"

"For heaven's sake. That would be no life for me. In a trailer on a campground with shared toilets. No way."

"Sounds like you don't like Shiva."

"I don't have anything against him. But it's the way he hugs."

Sisyphus looks questioningly. "A little long?"

"It's not the duration, it's the way. It's like he's known you for years and you've been in bed together many times. There's something flattering about that. But then you see him do that with everybody. It makes me feel like I'm not meant to be."

And because she realizes that Sisyphus would like to know more but won't ask, she adds: "We never had anything. I think Shiva would have wanted to, but the superficial doesn't do me any good. Actually, I don't mind affairs, but it's that special Shiva superficiality. "

"He's not taking responsibility."

Sisyphus could bite off his tongue for this sentence. He of all people, the liar of the evening, talks about responsibility.

Where does he get this idea?

But since Prem Mada does not know his true story, Sisyphus' remark goes down. Not entirely, as he will find out later, but it even seems to have surrounded him with an aura of something trustworthy from one second to the next. And again he has to get the hang of another subject.

"How do you do it: three months Poona and now still here? I mean, don't you have a job?"

"Yes, I did, but that was a dream. I took a sabbatical, but I'm going back next week. And until then, I want to enjoy life."

Sisyphus' drink is empty, and since he has nothing to say, they both remain silent for a while.

It is a pleasant silence.

"Will you walk me home?"

And after a brief pause, she adds, "Because of the beach dogs. Sometimes they snap."

The request surprises Sisyphus, and although he senses that he really wants to be alone with

himself, he says, "Sure."

In addition, the thing with the dogs is understandable, because one of these beach dogs once snapped at Mark in Candolim. Marlis then yelled at him why he wasn't doing anything. But what should he have done? Lunge at the mutt and break its neck?

So Sisyphus accompanies Prem Mada the short distance along the cliffs. Anyway, saying no was never Sisyphus' thing, and why should he have said no? He tells himself that he can always leave later, although he knows very well that the longer he delays saying no, the harder it will be for him to say it later, if at all.

It is also only an escort. Up to the door. Because of the dogs.

No sex - although Sisyphus must honestly admit that he is a bit split on that.

Just outside her apartment, she says she's not tired yet and asks Sisyphus if he's ever had a tantric massage.

"No."

"And would you like to?"

And since Sisyphus, as usual, thinks too long, she answers the question herself, "Unexpected things often happen. Come in."

Compared to Sisyphus' cubbyhole, Prem Mada's apartment seems categories better. Not by size, but it is cozy.

"You can't imagine what it looked like when I moved in. But a few scarves and stuff from Anjuna Market. Voila. Are you unsure?"

"I've never gotten anything like this before."

"Then be surprised."

Since Sisyphus makes no move to do anything, she adds, "Just take off your clothes, lie on the bed and relax."

"Take it all off?"

"Sure. You're about to get the first and best tantric massage of your life."

Sisyphus is already going too fast again, and he is not relaxed either. When she notices, however, it only seems to spur her ambition to give Sisyphus a perfect massage.

Of course, Sisyphus could say that this is going too fast for him, or that she should explain the process to him first. But there again is Sisyphus' difficulty in feeling his needs and his cowardice in taking care of himself.

Sisyphus then says to himself, what the heck, and goes along with too much for too long. He hopes to be able to sit things out, because he has made the experience that a lot of things really do take care of themselves if he just lets them pass patiently and dully over him. This worked well for Marlis until his escape, and bad habits don't change that quickly.

At least he seems to feel by now that he would have something to say, even if it still sticks in his throat. That is tremendous progress. Three days ago, he didn't even have the inner impulse to say anything, but resignedly surrendered to his fate.

Sisyphus is embarrassed to lie completely undressed on a strange bed. In the room of a woman he has only known for about ten hours and whose complicated name he still hasn't remembered. The fact that Ma Prem Mada comes out of the bathroom with only a towel wrapped around her hips makes the situation even worse. She also has a really nice bosom.

It reminds him a little of the nude photos of the supposed Swedish Olympian in crossbow shooting Sara Boberg that have been circulating on the Internet. He was really into her once and then was terribly disappointed when he found out that there is no Sara Boberg and that crossbow shooting was never an Olympic discipline.

Everything is illusion, everything is only in his head - and yet he feels a connection to his body, because the more he recalls the images, the more vivid they become, the more he begins to feel and relax. For the time being. Sisyphus closes his eyes.

Nevertheless, it will not really let go, because no matter how Ma Prem Mada massages his member, what she calls Lingam and Vashra, it does not want to stand.

Sisyphus cannot stay with himself. He cannot let himself go and enjoy. Instead, he thinks about whether he has to do something, whether he is doing everything right, whether he is fulfilling Prem Mada's expectations. Moreover, he is ashamed that nothing stirs in him.

He also can't get it out of his head that Marlis didn't leave a message.

And what about Mark?

His thoughts don't want to stop.

What is Marlis doing? Right now?

The next moment he remembers the guru from Mumbai, Sara Boberg, and then he is back to Ma Prem Mada, and how disappointed she must be in him, with all the effort she puts in.

"It doesn't work."

"Nothing has to go there. Isn't it beautiful?"

"Yeah, but. That's never happened to me before."

"Never mind. Relax. Just let go."

That's easier said than done when a storm of thoughts erupts in your head after a prolonged drought.

"Lass, I better go."

"Too bad."

On the way to his room, Sisyphus berates himself: "Wimp. You could have really laid her. You should have fucked until you were sweating. Until nothing works anymore."

But the same Sisyphus knows very well that he is lying into his pocket. He could not have done anything. He was hopelessly overwhelmed by this Ma-Prem-Mada-Sara-Boberg appearance and her tantric massage.

But that's the way it is, cowardice is not only punishable by life imprisonment, but worse, self-castration and impotence.

But no sooner is Sisyphus in his room and the door locked than he masturbates for all he's worth. Twice almost directly one after the other. And of course the head cinema works, in which even Ma Prem Mada plays a leading role. Sisyphus' lingam also stands like a one. Who would have thought. When he doesn't have to please anyone, he can really let go.

He takes a shower, lies down on the bed and makes a decision: he will call Marlis.

But only when he has decided, of his own free will and with responsibility for all future consequences, how he wants to live in the future.

He will call as soon as he knows what to say.

Until then, he needs time.

Before that, he will visit the ex-banker guru in Mumbai.

He googled and found out: His name is Ramesh S. Balsekar, he was one of the General Managers of the Bank of India and he holds Satsang daily at 9:30 a.m. in Apartment No. 10 in the Sindhula Building on Nawroji Gamadia Road in Mumbai.

Sisyphus on a Satsang or, as Ramesh calls it on his website, Prayer, he could not have imagined two days ago. But sometimes times change quickly.

Sisyphus will extend his return flight to Switzerland and book a flight to Mumbai. He has exactly one week left before he has to go back to work. Actually, a ski tour with old friends was planned, but he can make up for that later. Now he is in India.

The day after tomorrow Sisyphus will go to Candolim and return his scooter.

He fervently hopes not to run into Marlis in the process.

In the long version of the song "Tobacco Road" by Eric Burdon, at a point where everything seems hopeless, it says: "No place to run, no place to hide. "

There stands Sisyphus; and that he does not want to meet Marlis has less to do with the fact that he would have to justify his escape than with the inability to separate himself.

Sisyphus never learned to get things done in his own time; instead, he conformed beyond recognition. He became mentally and physically impotent and unimaginative.

Admittedly, he never perceived it that way, because the impotent man does not stand out much among other impotents. Nevertheless, the promises of marriage, a healthy and supposedly happy family, and the annual bonuses do not seem to have been enough to finally put the savage to sleep and dispose of him.

Everyday life is distracting, everyday life makes you tired.

The few seconds before Sisyphus' escape, when he got on his scooter in front of the Lavande Supermarket, were not an everyday occurrence. He had to be awake: driving on the left in a foreign country. When he reflects, it seems to him that in that brief moment all his channels were open and that's why he perceived the voice of the wild journeyman so clearly.

She was always there, but since the end of puberty she has never been so impressive, not so decisive.

Everyday life paralyzes.

When two hold each other, whether in an embrace or to delay a fight, one will have to take the first step toward letting go, toward separation. If no one moves, there is no development.

But the longer two are wedged together, the more rusty are the mechanisms for liberation and for life after.

The one who makes the first move will then have to wear the jersey of evil, at least temporarily.

At the moment, that's Sisyphus. Because shouldn't he at least have tried to talk to Marlis?

He could have called a family council, and if he was going to run, he should have at least called a day later.

That's easy to say: but did Sisyphus really have any other option than to run away head over

heels?

For sure, many men in Sisyphus situation act differently, otherwise the world would be full of volatile husbands.

But did Sisyphus have a choice?

If, as the mystics say, there is an all-controlling source, a predetermined destiny or the like, then he had no alternative but to follow the immediate impulse of this alien power. This would be true even if he lived in a society where leaving the family was punishable by death. Sooner or later, he would be caught and hanged or stoned.

In all other cases, however, we can assume that he could at least have thought and weighed things over.

But what if Sisyphus never learned in his entire life how to deal with and untangle stuck, wedged situations?

If he never learned that besides retreat there is also the possibility of confrontation?

Then the only choice is between life imprisonment and escape.

Sisyphus' and Marlis' partnership can be compared to a mechanism in which each part depends on another. But unfortunately, some gears are blocked by rust.

But what good is the most beautiful love machine if the wheels stand still?

For sure, they both made an effort to brush over the patina and dust it off, but that's just not enough.

It would have needed oil or some other lubricant.

Both were afraid of this, because if the mechanics had started to move, other wheels would also have moved and that would have had consequences. Unpredictable, incalculable effects, which in turn could have terrible consequences.

Sisyphus' escape was the rust remover, and now something is going again.

Neither Sisyphus nor Marlis know where this will lead, but at least both are on the move. And since the gears are turning again, they will of necessity have to leave their worlds of dreams and escape in order to grow up and take on responsibility, uninfluenced by each other, each for himself.

They can figure out what they want - independent of parents, in-laws, and all the usual stuff.

Hiding places and escapes will no longer exist, but this does not mean giving up dreams that are not of this world.

But first they both have to gain ground, as does the plane in which Mark and Marlis are sitting

and whose landing gear is just being extended with a rumble by the pilot for landing in Zurich.

Marlis didn't sleep a wink during the flight. She was thinking about everything that would come now: her mother, friends, Sisyphus' boss. After all, it has now been five days since she last saw and heard from Sisyphus.

And then there is Mark, who sleeps during the landing approach, but who has spent the previous eight hours annoying Marlis and the man sitting on the other side. Mark, who wouldn't stop asking questions, who didn't like the food or the entertainment program in the in-flight cinema. Mark, who wanted to know everything about airplanes, but not because it interested him, but because he was looking for contact and attention.

Mark has been the victim of his parents' uptightness for far too long. But that's the way it is when two people get stuck in a worthless harmony: the bone is then eaten by a third. But this bone is a few sizes too big for Mark, so he runs the risk of choking on it. Of necessity, he has to throw up parts of it in between, and if you were to create a scale on which you would enter Mark's scuffles, it would correspond exactly to the relationship lows between Sisyphus and Marlis.

Marlis kept wishing that Sisyphus would put his foot down, but he persistently kept silent, because when he used to say something, it was pedagogically wrong. He's the IT guy, she's the pedagogue.

He stays out of it. Besides, Mark has remarkably good grades. A little roughhousing in the schoolyard - other parents and the teachers don't have to make a topic for a parents' evening out of that.

Marlis is embarrassed by Mark's aggression. She also hates being the center of attention because of him. After all, she is a teacher.

If only Sisyphus would care a little more about his son!

But no, Mark can do whatever he wants.

Marlis tends to forget that Mark has always been able to do whatever he wants. Even at the age of five, he could squeeze into bed between his parents and demonstrate that he could take Sisyphus' place if he wanted to.

Unconsciously, Marlis allowed this to happen, because when Sisyphus was on a training course, she was happy for her little man, who, of course, would have been the better man for her in his world.

As soon as Sisyphus was back, he was the beloved father on one side, but Mark's competitor

on the other.

And then this unpleasant incident.

It was just before the vacation when she got a call from a colleague, an English teacher.

Mark is said to have spit on his bald head.

At first, she thought it was a joke among colleagues and wondered how that could work, a child spitting on the bald head of a much larger teacher.

But to their chagrin, it wasn't a prank, it turned out that the teacher was going up a flight of stairs. He looked up as he did so, and at that exact moment Mark dropped his snot through the open gap between the banisters.

Mark knew exactly what he was doing because their eyes had met seconds before. The English teacher was so irritated that he didn't even pull his head away and it slapped right on his bald forehead.

He called Marlis and Marlis confronted Mark.

He could think of no better answer than, "He's just bald."

"Did you apologize then?"

"For what, he scolded me afterwards."

"Sisyphus, now say something."

But Sisyphus said nothing.

On the one hand, he knew that you don't spit on English teachers who are bald, but on the other hand, he was highly amused because a part of him wished he could spit on his boss's bare skull for once.

So Sisyphus asked, "Was that really necessary?"

And Mark grinned and said, "Yeah. "

That's how it always went.

Marlis was mad at Sisyphus. Sisyphus was mad because Marlis couldn't laugh with him, and Mark was once again disappointed that his parents were fighting over him.

Not knowing what else to do, he went out and kicked another child in the feet while he was playing soccer in a way that you really don't do - unless it's the final of a World Cup.

Then he sat in class, fidgeting and unable to concentrate. He thought about Dad and Mom and was distraught about everything he had done. And since this feeling didn't disappear on its own, he looked for a way out: for example, aiming at dogs with his slingshot or a little jostling among

friends.

All this made Mark unconscious. And it would probably disappear immediately if Mark could feel that his parents loved each other, or at least were doing everything they could to find their love again.

While the plane rolls up to the gate, he slumbers. Marlis, on the other hand, is overtired and knows exactly what will happen if she wakes Mark: He's grumpy, he doesn't want to get up, he's hungry. Then there's the time difference: for Mark, it's three in the morning.

In Zurich, however, it is seven in the morning and Marlis is glad that a friend and not her mother is picking her up from the airport. She has explained it to her mother with Sabine's larger car and the amount of luggage. Responsible as Marlis is, she has not left Sisyphus' suitcase in Goa, despite the excess baggage problem at check-in.

Marlis has been back for five days.

At first, the empty house, but also the curiosity of her neighbor, gave her a hard time. Now it was taking its revenge that they had chosen the child-friendly variant with an open terrace. A mini energy row house, with a play street in front of the door: Everyone watches the steps of the others and it seems to Marlis that only the cameras for perfect surveillance are missing.

Before Sisyphus' disappearance, Marlis did not find this oppressive. She was annoyed by how thin-skinned she had become. After Mark's birth, she enjoyed having neighborly contacts, because they are not something that can be taken for granted in Zurich's dormitory towns. Neither country nor city, the suburbs are characterized less by togetherness than by the flight of their inhabitants from one another. Even empty encounters are worth their weight in gold. Besides, Marlis never had anything to hide. Until now. She feels a vague pressure.

The shadow side of neighborliness is competition: for the perfect relationship, the best job, the most intelligent and sporty children - well-mannered and equipped with courteous politeness, yet appearing casual and unstrained. It is a subtle structure in which no one is allowed to fall below a certain standard, but also not to exceed it with lived joy.

The more often people meet, the more intricate the hierarchies become, and the more often they barbecue together, the more exhausting the competition becomes. There is no room for humanity, weaknesses and difficulties in this idyll trimmed to perfection. A couple with problems

has to solve them. Quickly and cleanly. But for heaven's sake, don't involve the neighbors.

You have enough challenges of your own.

And what are swingers clubs, brothels and divorce lawyers for?

Marlis was playing hide-and-seek with her neighbor. She would have liked to meet her by chance and find out where Sisyphus had gone in a seemingly trivial chat. Word quickly got around that he was not on the plane to Zurich. In a microcosm built on control, nothing escapes the attention of the authorities.

Marlis avoided any possibility of meeting. To go shopping, she drove to a small town fifteen kilometers away and not to the nearby shopping center. She had also impressed upon Mark not to tell the other children anything, at least for the time being. She knew that wouldn't last long.

Marlis seemed rushed, she got stress spots and sleep disturbances. It could be the jet lag, the empty pillow next to her, or her inner emptiness, which cyclically mixed anger and sadness. The worst part for her was not knowing. What was going on with Sisyphus and what would happen next.

But there was something else: the eternal repetitions. Already in the last days in Goa she had felt it: Getting up. Eating breakfast. Taking Mark to care. Yoga. Picking up Mark. Beach. Eat something in between. Sleep.

Restless sleep, with a diffuse fear in the neck of the next ritualized day. Hours interlocked under tension. A strictly timed structure that tries to avoid idle time. If unplanned breaks nevertheless arose, Marlis could water flowers, clean, tidy up, fold laundry.

Since Sisyphus' escape, the gaps in this sequence had become larger. The stopgap had left moments of loneliness.

This is not to say, conversely, that Sisyphus alleviated the mockery of meaningless, repetitive work. He only made it more bearable. Talking to Sisyphus was like talking to a wall, but at least Marlis could get angry at someone. Her anger had a direction and a counterpart.

Now she wondered how she was going to muster the strength for the next day, for the repetitions of the eternal same, and the thought of a bleak morning robbed her of sleep. The everyday fatigue before the vacation had turned into a leaden trance in which Marlis saw only her insurmountable fate. Every day something was lost and she had no idea for what.

In between, Marlis wished for the state before Sisyphus' escape back, because even with sluggishly exhausting half-yearsex, a form of connectedness could grow in adversity. A

consolation.

Now she was alone.

There was no one to overhear her babbling out repetitions, and the absence of the valve increased the pressure. She could no longer hear her own whining.

In her song "The Ballad of Lucy Jordan," Marianne Faithfull offers, in addition to suicide, two options for dealing with ossified rituals of well-kept suburbia: continue to spend hours cleaning the house and rearranging the flowers, or run naked and screaming through the city.

All three were eliminated for Marlis.

Nevertheless, she was clear that she could not hide all her life, not in this environment. She would be found and then a subtle tribunal would begin with no possibility of defense.

But if execution was inevitable, Marlis at least wanted to walk to the place of execution with her head defiantly held high. However, she had no idea how to express her stubbornness. All ideas failed her ideas of socially appropriate behavior. Her shame was greater than her fear of death, which she told herself she did not want only because of Mark.

Her first days and nights were unbearable. On the third, however, Marlis received a visit from her best friend, and slowly the mood began to change.

Now it's the weekend, and on the surface Marlis has caught herself. Instead of moping around or mourning Sisyphus, she has something in mind. She is going to try something completely new. She will push it through stubbornly and against all resistance and reservations.

It would be a laugh if she let Sisyphus' stupid idea of running away and an Orwellian row house settlement get her down and she lost her will to live.

She was encouraged by an encounter on the last day of her yoga class.

Shortly after she said goodbye to her group and was already on her way to her cab, the man who had only eyes for the woman in front of him during Adho Mukha Svanasana stood next to her.

"It's too bad you're leaving tomorrow. I would have loved to have met you."

Marlis was surprised that the man had noticed her at all. She was convinced that he only came to the yoga because of the other woman. She reacted accordingly dismissively.

"Well, there's nothing you can do."

The man, however, persisted.

"I think it's a real shame that you're flying. You've looked sad the last few days. Sad, but also beautiful."

"What you're looking at."

"Yes. A touching beauty."

"I have to go now. My son is waiting."

"Can I take you to dinner tonight?"

"Barely. I have to pack. Plus, I don't have childcare."

"Why don't you bring him?"

"He'd just get bored."

"How old is he?"

"Ten."

"That fits. My daughter is eleven."

"I didn't even know you had a daughter. What about your wife? I mean, her mother?"

"Died in an accident two years ago."

"I'm sorry about that."

"Why, it's not your fault. Besides, I don't have a tattoo on my forehead: 'single widower'. So, what about tonight? We can pick you up in a cab, then we'll go to Sublime. It's a great restaurant. You'd love it."

The man's openness and that he wanted to bring his daughter melted Marli's initial reluctance, but her curiosity about his life story also played a role.

She agreed, and only after she agreed did she realize that, with Mark in tow, she wouldn't be able to avoid talking about Sisyphus' disappearance. Oddly enough, she was able to come to terms with it. It was her last day in Goa and they would never see each other again anyway.

That evening, when the man picked her and Mark up, she was shocked to recognize another person in the cab: the woman who never wore a bra under her yoga shirt.

She wanted to run away, but it was too late. The cab had stopped, the door was opened from the inside, and the man called out cheerfully, "Come on. Get in."

Marlis said nothing. At the sight of the Adho Mukha Svanasana woman, her mood had sunk far below zero. What an impertinence to bring just that one! Wasn't it enough that he was constantly looking at her tits during yoga? Did he have to show Marlis off now, too?

"Hello Marlis. I'm glad you decided to join us for dinner on your last night. By the way, this is Monika, my sister."

Marlis gulped, "Hello Monika."

"I couldn't have done Goa and the yoga class without them. But you know yourself how it is with childcare."

"But you were mostly in yoga together, right?"

"Sometimes we were lucky enough to have Monika's landlady take my daughter."

It took some time for Marlis to regain her composure. Above all, the stumbling over her prejudices had taken its toll on her.

It turned out to be a lovely evening. The food was exquisite and a change from the beach stalls. Mark played with Bernd's daughter and when she brought the cab back, they exchanged addresses and phone numbers.

For Marlis, the most touching thing was when Bernd talked about the time after losing his wife. It was an honest, at times brutal reflection on partnership and love, despair and alienation, and the most final moment in life. One of Bernd's sentences remained particularly in Marlis' memory: "It's an excuse that we don't have time and everything will get better by itself at some point. It doesn't get better. The only thing we can do is to give our love away immediately. Immediately and without any reservation. With everything we hold back, we only punish ourselves. Because it will not get better, but with absolute certainty at some point impossible. In this body we have only one life. What comes next, no one knows."

This was more direct than any satsang: a single life, and no one knows if it will not end suddenly. She had thought about it a lot, and to her dismay, she realized that she had been living only for the family for a long time, putting her needs aside. She had disposed of all desire and liveliness in a padded cell whose walls were made of habit and morality. At some point, and under the dictates of never-ending repetitions, she later threw away the key to this forbidden wing: "... and lead us not into temptation. "

Back in Zurich and encouraged by her best friend, however, Marlis decided to follow the passions she had pushed aside from now on. It was a rebellion against the seemingly prescribed predestination. A last attempt.

However, taking things into one's own hands and understanding fate as a human matter that must be settled among people and without God is not without its problems for a temporary single

parent with a ten-year-old boy: it requires a clear head, a relaxed body and, above all, time.

How good that grandma is there; she will take Mark to stay with her from Friday to Sunday. That has never been a problem, and Mark also seems to be looking forward to a pampering weekend with his grandparents.

The bags from India are unpacked, the laundry is washed. Mark's room, however, is untidy. Marlis had no impulse to put things in order.

What's the big deal about a kid's room being messier? That stimulates creativity.

In any case, Marlis is amazed at how naturally Mark puts his father's disappearance behind him. Compared to other times, he is tame. When her mother arrives, Marlis nevertheless closes the door to Mark's playroom. Under no circumstances does she want her to go in.

For Marlis it is the first meeting with her mother after India, and already the phone call in which she asked her to take Mark to stay with her for the weekend was exhausting. Now comes the most terrible moment. Her mother will confront her:

That Sisyphus was the wrong man.

That she has always known.

That she warned Marlis.

That Sisyphus is not her husband, but she would certainly know what she would do.

And that it has always been the case that people talk their mouths off to Marlis.

The whole program. And not just once.

Marlis knows that her mother has countless versions in store, just as she knows an infinite number of variations with which she can drive Sisyphus up the wall.

Like Sisyphus, Marlis would need time. The meeting with her mother is much too early. She is unsorted and would have preferred to cancel it, but then she would not have a free weekend. On the other hand: it's her mother and Mark is her mother's grandson and her mother is Mark's grandmother and all.

Besides, her mother means well. She always wanted Marlis to have it better than her. That is why she is now advising her to divorce.

But Marlis counters: "Don't talk to me about divorce. Why didn't you get a divorce? The way you always scolded Daddy. Behind his back. And then you let off steam at our place."

"Those were different times. A single mother - that was unimaginable back then. Besides, our father always took good care of everyone."

"He's not your father. You are married."

"And you never wanted to be a single parent either. Now you are."

"That's far from certain."

"As sure as eggs is eggs. I never liked that Sisyphus much, but you wanted him so bad. If only you'd thought it through better. But there's nothing you can do about it now. The Andrea you went to school with has been divorced for over a year now and she's getting along fine. She has now met a man. You wouldn't believe how many board members he's on."

"I'm not getting a divorce."

"We'll see about that. Wait and see what you think a year from now when your Sisyphus has looted all the accounts."

"Nothing you will see."

"What was he thinking, just disappearing like that! "

"Daddy used to disappear, too. First he tinkered with his model cars in the basement and later with computers."

"That's different. He never left his family. "

The conversation goes exactly as Marlis imagined. There is no point in talking to her mother.

But she doesn't stop, but shifts up a gear: "You know I'm always behind you, but have you ever thought about whether Sisyphus' disappearance might have something to do with you? I don't want to interfere in your relationship, but ..."

"You're just butting in."

"My goodness, do you think your father was always easy? That's when you have to grit your teeth as a woman."

"What do you mean?"

"The last time I saw Sisyphus, he didn't necessarily seem happy."

"Please say clearly what you mean."

"You were never easy. I saw how your first boyfriend suffered. That was a really fine one. And from a good family."

"You know exactly what happened. He hit on my best friend and to this day I don't know if they were in bed together."

"That was an educated young man, he will have had his reasons. By the way, I talked to Uncle Peter."

"About what? You know I don't like him, that know-it-all. Besides, he's a groper."

"Oh, God, just because when you were fourteen he gave you a pat on the butt once. Nobody ever died from that."

"That wasn't a slap. He got to my ass."

"Yeah maybe, but he just thought you were the little girl."

"That's exactly what he didn't. But we don't have to argue about that now. I told you I wanted nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with Peter. That was assaultive, uncle or no uncle. "

"At some point, you have to draw a line under old things."

"Today, that would be called abuse."

"Don't make me laugh. A slap on the butt of a fourteen-year-old! Peter is married for the fifth time. What does he want with a fourteen-year-old, pubescent brat?"

"Let's not. What did you tell him."

"I described your problem. He is a lawyer and could help you with your divorce. He explained to me that it's not so easy when your husband suddenly disappears. You have to report him missing or have him declared dead. But you have no idea about that. You probably haven't even filed a report with the police until today."

"Sisyphus is not dead."

"How would you know?"

"He's not dead, and eventually he'll come forward."

"Well, you don't die of syphilis or gonorrhea that quickly today."

"That's it."

"I just mean what you hear from Thailand."

"We were in India."

"All this yoga mumbo jumbo. Maybe he's sitting with a guru who's taking his money out of his pocket."

"Sisyphus and a guru. Never, ever."

"Don't be so sure about that. You were also convinced that he was reliable. And now? Don't forget that we're guaranteeing the mortgage on the house. I don't even want to know what else is in store for us. But it's my fault, too. You've always had a destructive will and we've let it slide too much."

"That's enough. And if you never took responsibility, that's your business. I'll take them and I

won't divorce you. By the way, while we're at it: Do you know how many times I've been there for you just because daddy was sitting in the basement transferring something from one hard drive to another again? Because he was too cheap to buy a bigger one. Do you actually know who gave him the first perfectly working computer? Sisyphus."

"Those were just gimmicks, but nobody ran away. Don't you want to see that, don't you ever want to arrive at reality?"

"Stop. Your life is your life and please leave mine to me."

"I can't believe it. You're proud to be abandoned, too."

"Please stop. I can't take it anymore."

At first, Marlis tried to pull herself together. To remain objective and calm. Then she became desperate, and now she is angry. Her mother senses that.

And since Marlis' mother is not interested in real communication, in learning from each other and growing together, but in power, her mother adds: "Then I can go and you can see how you get on for the weekend. With all the things I have to listen to, I don't even know why I came by. I really have better things to do with my time."

"Please. Please stop."

"No, you're still listening to that now. After all, I get to see Mark blossom when he's with us."

Marlis knows that this is the last register her mother will pull: what a bad mother Marlis is. What Mark tells grandma when he visits, and that Mark never got a proper upbringing.

Marlis says nothing, because she knows that as soon as she has tears, it's all over. Her mother has won and can later apologize magnanimously. The relationship is straightened out: Marlis, the ignorant daughter who has no clue about life. On the other side, her mother, who means well and sometimes has to protect her daughter even against her will.

That was always the case, and in the past Marlis actually didn't stand up to her mother. She was the brave, well-adjusted one and left the rebellion to her sister. She provoked her sister with ultra-short skirts and belly-free tops until her mother not only called her vulgar, but in a fit of massive educational transgression disposed of the sluttiest pieces of slut clothing from her closet. Marlis was not affected by this, but it still left its mark on her. Slowly she realizes where her rigid judgments, like the one against Monika, the adho mukha svanasana woman, come from. Her disdain for anything supposedly nonsensical, such as computer games, certainly has its origins in this culture-conscious but ossified educated bourgeoisie.

But all this knowledge is of no use to her, because at the moment her mother is in the driver's

seat. She could ruin her weekend.

Mark, who has heard the swelling volume at the end of the argument, comes crying out of his room and asks if grandma is leaving now, too.

Marlis looks at her mother and she looks guiltily, but not entirely without blame, at Marlis. And although they both know that continuing to fight will only lead to an even more violent escalation, Marlis' mother can't help saying, "There, you see what you've done."

Then she holds out her arms for Mark: "No, grandma's not going".

This in turn upsets Marlis to such an extent that she tells her mother that she can well understand Sisyphus: With a mother-in-law like that, she would have left too, and that's no way to go on. It doesn't work if you always have to be considerate, considerate, considerate of each other.

Now it's over. Mark no longer knows who to look to for guidance and begins to cry. He has no idea why. It comes over him, and when Marlis wants to take him in her arms, he pushes her away.

Of course, the connection with his mother is stronger, but at the moment his grandmother radiates more security. That's what Mark needs right now.

Marlis would love to throw her mother out, take Mark in her arms, lie down in bed with him and cry.

But that doesn't work, because there's a tingle and a pull. She is torn between her egoism, the new thing she wants to try out, her mother, Mark and the still-partnership with Sisyphus.

Marlis' feelings are confusing and paradoxical: the more her mother intervenes, the more Marlis feels how important this noch partnership is for her. She senses that this is not defiance, but neither could she say what it is and where it leads.

Probably for the first time in her life everything is open.

It seems as if the situation between Marlis and her mother has been dead for a long time, but that is deceptive. Just before their vacation in Goa, they spent some nice days together in Ticino, almost like friends.

The vehemence of the current conflict is therefore primarily due to the helplessness of Marlis' mother. Worlds collapse when the unthinkable, what one has always pushed away oneself, happens to one's daughter. And she doesn't even want to see that she has been abandoned. It almost seems as if she is amused by it. At least she doesn't seem to mind.

There's something to that, because in fact Marlis is not suffering at the moment as one might expect.

Her head is somewhere else, because Marlis is meeting a man today.

She meets a man she has never seen in the flesh before, with whom she has never spoken, but only exchanged e-mails and a photo. Her friend Sabine gave her the idea for this "casual date," which is something between a one-night stand and an affair.

Three days after Marlis had returned from Goa and Sabine had picked her up at the airport, they met again in the evening.

It was a long evening with an overtired cooked meal and lots of wine. In the course of the get-together, Sabine was able to convince Marlis that the relationship with Sisyphus was perhaps not as good as Marlis always thought.

She did it as carefully and gently as only a best friend can. Marlis listened. Even if she didn't like many things and often wanted to contradict.

She listened and had to learn that she cleaned conspicuously much and hid behind housework and child rearing. That she usually took others more important than herself, mothered Sisyphus and thus became unattractive to him. What shocked Marlis the most was that her friends already noticed this. She had never perceived it that way, for her it was a matter of course.

Of course, Marlis had noticed that she rarely went out with her old friends anymore and didn't even party every half year.

But isn't that normal when you get older, have a husband, a child and a house?

You're tired in the evening.

Sabine wanted to know if she felt that she had lost something.

Marlis had no answer. It seemed natural to her that with Mark's birth her interests and preferences had shifted. That she adapted to the circumstances. Just as she always did.

"So, are you still having sex?" asked Sabine.

Marlis swallowed and in the end had to admit that Sisyphus and she were starving. That it never really fit. Because there was always defense and excuses and at some point neither of them had any energy left to take the initiative.

There were too many no's.

She would never have discussed this with Sisyphus, nor would she have admitted it. Sexual difficulties, loss of desire, that did not fit into her image of a healthy partnership, although it had been reality for over five years. Otherwise the marriage was good, at least as good as that of her mother. But what that meant in plain language was that it was shitty.

Marlis also knew that she had long since ceased to be who she once was: active and lustful. At least, that's what she believed she once was.

But had she ever lived the sex and lust she craved?

Sabine's opinion was clear: No. Never.

Sabine reminded Marlis that she had already been reserved in the past. That she never wore a plunging neckline and even today, when she made an afternoon trip to the Street Parade once a year, she would never wear a daring top.

Sabine wanted to know if it never appealed to her to appear seductive.

That is one of Marli's problems: Where is the line between daringly seductive and exhibitionism?

She had no idea. She only knew that she never risked anything in her life. That she never dared to confront her lust and to live her quite existing narcissistic parts. Instead, she preferred to point her finger at others. Just like her mother.

She had locked her feelings and sexuality in a safe and forgotten the combination. No yoga or spiritual distractions helped. Just as Sisyphus ignored or intellectualized things, she hid behind karmic entanglements and cosmic energies.

It was about time that she took possession of her body and sensuality. She just had no idea how.

Sabine is completely different, she has no fixed partnership and children, but she has lovers. Usually more than one.

In between, Sabine longs for a stable relationship again and again, but when there is a man who also wants that, it quickly becomes too close for her. She then prefers to have many successive affairs, although that also becomes exhausting in the meantime, especially when married guys fall in love with her.

She mostly says, "I don't know what he wants from me," and in her playful narcissistic coquetry overlooks the fact that it was she who wrapped him around her finger and danced him into a trance. She's good at that.

Sabine has high expectations of men, because of course she deserves only the best. But demands and reality diverge, and so the last men of Sabine's that Marlis can remember were an unemployed coke-snorting banker, a broker with a heavy tendency to alcohol, and a psychoanalyst with an empty practice. The cokehead lives with his mother after losing his apartment, and the psychoanalyst promptly left her for South East Asia after a sizable inheritance fell to him. What became of the broker, no one knows.

Despite all the disappointments, Sabine is convinced with each new adventure that this time it's

the right one. She then disappears from her friends' radar, only to reappear just as abruptly as soon as she finds out that it wasn't him after all.

Then she is stuck in a melancholic hole for several weeks.

These holes connect Marlis and Sabine.

In the high times, namely when Sabine has a new husband, Marlis and she never come into contact - they only meet when both inner emptiness takes over.

With Sabine, this happens in waves.

With Sisyphus, on the other hand, Marlis has been in a permanent hole for over five years.

Marlis had long felt that something had to change. However, she could not imagine this change with Sisyphus. So they agreed to leave out the subject of change. Unspoken, of course. Which in turn led to each of them remaining alone with their longings and both of them pretending to be crampedly content.

Under this lid, Marlis was seething with a longing for devotion.

Devotion, however, requires a counterpart.

Sisyphus was not. Even in her best days, Marlis would never have thought of throwing herself passionately against his chest.

Later, Sisyphus withdrew - as her father did from her mother.

What kind of devotion is this going to be?

Devotion to a nothing?

In order not to feel the lack, Marlis made the flame under her pot smaller. She took away the energy and closed herself as well.

Between her and Sisyphus it became one-sided. Not only from her point of view, but also Sisyphus' actions mostly missed her by a hair's breadth. They no longer saw each other, but became entangled in misunderstandings, the clarification of which they kept postponing with reference to the duties of everyday life. Feeling, sensing a lack, but also a joy of life, would have shaken their fragile peace. That had to be avoided, if only because of Mark.

Shackles are felt by those who move.

It was an inconspicuous book that brought the well-repressed longing for letting go in her to life: "11 Minutes" by Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho.

There is an adult scene in the middle of the book. The main character, prostitute Maria, has a

special suitor. He introduces her to the world of sadomasochism: Maria must obey his commands, and if she is not fast enough, he beats her with a whip. It hurts, but it also gives her pleasure, and at the end, when the suitor touches her sex with the whip handle, she explodes in a gigantic orgasm. At this, Maria's entire worldview begins to crumble. She has never felt so much ecstasy as during this practice associated with pain and humiliation.

The name Mary alone: like Mary Magdalene, the sinner who washes Jesus' feet. To sell oneself, to surrender and let go, to feel something once again. Something long lost, which nevertheless has not disappeared, but bobs along in the shadow of the indecent.

But there is a huge difference: Mary from the book is a whore. Her job is to give and sell herself. Marlis is married to Sisyphus the IT director and has a son.

Besides, she was never into physical pain, nor did she ever intend to be humiliated. What fascinated her was only that the suitor had Maria at his disposal, and therefore she had no choice but to let go at some point.

To surrender totally.

Marlis longs for that, too. That it stops. That it ends with a blow and the thoughts of Mark, bad breath, light discharge, shopping lists and getting up the next day, dissolve.

She is convinced: Her inner space will then fill with lust and ecstasy.

She put down the book of Sisyphus.

He didn't even get past the first five pages, then he researched Coelho on the Internet and only called him Boulevard-Coelho with disdain. Since then, Sisyphus has also attributed every halfway spiritual or soul-appealing book with the attribute "like tabloid Coelho," even if it wasn't by him at all.

My, how little this man cared for her!

Marlis pushed it away. No devotion then.

Besides, there was a withered layer of shame over her longing: better no sex than dirty sex.

Is there even an alternative between no sex and dirty sex?

Is there any clean sex in clinically white sheets that you can have married and after having a son?

Marlis senses that this clean sex, a sexuality that she believes corresponds to her mother's images, does not exist. Control and passion in the same place are an illusion. On the other hand, not being censored and taking risks creates stress. What remains is routine with decreasing frequency.

That evening, Sabine decided enough was enough: "Do you still want to put cobwebs on?"

Sisyphus is gone. Who knows when he'll reappear. Maybe tomorrow. So go ahead. You have no time to lose. Take a chance and play with your submissive side."

"For heaven's sake. It's just fantasy. You can't put every sexual idea into practice right away."

"Why not, actually? You don't have to go to bed with everyone right away."

"How is that going to work? I've never been the bar type. Besides, I don't feel like being texted all over by random guys."

"Today you don't go to bars or discos. Maybe to dance or have a drink. But not to meet someone. Do you live on the moon? The sex-and-the-city generation does it online."

"Internet? Dating agency?"

"Not a dating service. Affairs. Without all the fuss around it. It saves time and is efficient."

"That sounds technical, unromantic."

"It's up to you what you make of it, isn't it?"

"Anyway, casual dating is totally in. It's just the thing for modern, working women like us. Women with little time who know what they want."

"My goodness, the way you talk. I've never heard of it."

"You've done a good job of repressing your lust."

"And you really think there are serious men there? Not only those who want to save money for the brothel?"

"You can figure that out. And why not play whore for once. You've mastered the role of the saint."

"With a complete stranger. You're nuts."

"I guess it didn't work out with Sisyphus."

"No. I need to know someone better."

"With the affair you're dreaming of, it's only going to hurt."

"Now make a point. Like I dream about strange men every night."

"I was just talking about emailing a little bit. You wouldn't believe the types of guys there are."

"You're dating over the internet?"

"Sure. You think I want to spend my time with drunken yakkers?"

"So, did you meet a man?"

"Several. I'll tell you: they're more exciting than what's on the loose. But now for you. Don't you want to try something new?"

"Just because I find something exciting doesn't mean I have to put it to the test right away. We're pretty different that way."

Marlis was coy.

Even in front of her best friend, she couldn't admit that sometimes she would definitely have a strong interest in daring unconventional things. But there's that layer of shame. There is her mother.

At a late hour and slightly drunk, however, she does have a website recommended to her.

Sabine says goodbye with a wink, "And don't forget to click 'submissive'."

Although they both laughed, the word "submissive" alone caused considerable concern in Marlis, because the opposite is dominant, and what emancipated woman likes to be dominated.

Nevertheless, Sisyphus has disappeared and she does not know whether he will reappear tomorrow or never. She doesn't need to have a guilty conscience.

The claim to fidelity should be settled with his disappearance.

After Sabine had left, this time without clearing up first, Marlis sat down at her laptop and looked through the pages of various agencies for "casual dates" and flings.

Marlis was torn. On the one hand, there was this impossible dirty feeling, and on the other, something was pulling her right there. Then she commuted back and closed the page in the browser.

Thoughts intruded: Is the Internet really anonymous - is it really impossible to track her down? She imagined that she might run into a colleague and immediately discarded the casual date idea.

Two glasses of wine later, she said to herself, "If not, now when?" and developed a special defiance that shifted her rigid concerns toward comforting fear.

Where there is fear, there is usually also lust, and Marlis got weak in the knees.

She decided to use a website where you didn't have to post pictures, just enter a few personal details and choose your sexual preference.

Not without hesitation Marlis made a check mark at submissive.

Then she cleaned up and went to sleep. She couldn't imagine that there would be any response at all to her meager information.

Another part of her, however, was so nervous that she could not fall asleep. She was torn between her internalized images of a perfect wife, the immaculate family, and on the other hand

the incipient rebellion against conventions and her repressed lust.

She breathed consciously and resolved: She would overcome her guilt, which forbade her selfishness and desire. She would allow her fearful, but also extremely curious side to discover itself.

The next morning, with a slight hangover and after taking Mark to school, she logged back into the agency.

She was overwhelmed by how many responses had landed in her mailbox overnight.

Thirty-seven.

The men only knew her age, her star sign and that she was looking for a dominant man for a tingling adventure.

Thirty-seven answers. Without reading even one, her self-confidence soared to unimagined heights.

There seemed to be a lot of men out there who were ready to get involved with Marlis at any time. Without a photo, just on the basis of a short profile.

That flattered.

Also, most of the mails had a pleasant, warm tone.

Only two threatened with a whip, and there also seemed to be a few spinners. Marlis deleted them immediately. She wasn't looking for sadomasochism, she was looking for a noncommittal, tingling erotic adventure with a dominant man. A man who knows what he wants.

Marlis read the remaining mails carefully, some even two or three times, then she selected one and replied.

The mail was short, but there was a quote from a Pauline Réage inserted at the end. She had never heard of this woman, but she liked the quote and also that the writer was quoting a woman: "Thank Heaven for the moments when someone passes in your arms and you in theirs. In those moments you resemble the clouds, the waters, are a blowing in the wind - the rest is the hard, incomprehensible life prepared for us and that we prepare for each other, you just have to endure it."

The sentences touched not only Marlis' lust but also her spiritual longing, especially the last word: erdulden. To endure the hard, incomprehensible life. Wasn't that exactly what she was doing at the moment?

So it is only understandable to want to pass away once and to dissolve with skin and hair in devotion.

This was her longing and by now she was determined to follow it.

Just the decision to try something new and take a risk had invigorated Marlis. She felt as if she had stepped out of a fountain of youth. She wanted to drink life - to drown in devotion. These were just imaginings, of course, because Marlis had no idea how she would react if things got serious. At the moment, she only felt that she was filled with a refreshing energy and that the bass of the bush drum, already thought dead, was vibrating in her belly.

With this body feeling, even the daily shower became a sensual experience.

Marlis put on a CD and danced. She felt herself. Finally.

She wanted to reply to the mail immediately, but that didn't work.

First she had to register with the agency for a fee. Marlis was shocked by the fees they wanted to charge to her credit card for a minimum membership of three months.

She didn't need three months of membership. She just wanted to answer this one mail.

There it was again: the hard, incomprehensible life that had to be endured.

So she entered her data and confirmed the payment.

What Sisyphus could do, she could do long ago.

The mails with the unknown person became longer.

But Marlis' doubts also increased with every mail. She wondered if what she was getting into was right, and in some bad moments she berated herself for her depravity.

Then photos should follow, but Marlis had no good photo. The best pictures had Sisyphus in them. She had to cut him off. At first she hesitated, but then it felt good to banish him symbolically, at least temporarily, from her life.

Pretty quickly came from the stranger the proposal to meet without obligation. He wrote: "A short walk by the lake. No more than half an hour. Then we should know if we are compatible."

Marlis liked the non-commitment, the not being fixed and she agreed.

Now that Mark is with his grandma, Marlis sets off.

They have arranged to meet at the Herzbaracke. A theater boat that is moored near the Quaibrücke in Zurich during the winter months. It's afternoon and a busy area. Marlis, by all accounts, would never have agreed to anything else.

There is fog over the city. It is cold, hazy and a strange, almost melancholic mood.

Marlis thought long and hard about whether to wear a skirt or pants, and then decided on a short skirt and fairly thin tights, despite the cold. She wears high shoes and a cloth coat with it.

She could not have imagined going out like this in winter a week ago. Rather, she always wondered when she saw such lightly dressed women and wondered if they wouldn't freeze.

They are freezing; at least that is what Marlis knows now.

In her case, shivering is mixed with nervousness.

Marlis could turn around. She could write a text message and apologize. She could say that something unpredictable was going on with Mark. But then she would gamble away her outburst. She would remain in the routine, the cause of which she still attributes to Sisyphus' inertia. She would acknowledge the judge's verdict of "life imprisonment" and, even if it is not a death sentence, at least agree to preventive detention.

It's just an innocuous walk by the lake. Nevertheless.

The stranger has not seen her yet, she could make her way back.

But there is also the other, a tension of expectant fear that captivates her.

Like on the first date. At the same time, she thought that this feeling was lost forever.

She smoked her last cigarette in India before taking off, but now Marlis is heading purposefully for the kiosk at Bellevue.

It is the mixture of all these perceptions: the nervousness, the cold, the inner tension and also a sexual stimulus that makes Marlis feel alive.

More than alive - she is indescribably alive and yet she is still fifteen minutes early.

She stays near a tree above the heart barracks. From here she can survey the area below and will see exactly when he arrives. She will dispose of the cigarette, take a mint and briefly touch up the lipstick.

What a thrill that is! But it's only a half-hour walk and it's not about love or falling in love.

In spite of this, or precisely because of this?

Marlis is divided. On the one hand, there is her body with its nervousness and a tingling in her belly, which occasionally turns into a fine eroticism. On the other hand, there is her head, the mind, which has to pull itself together not to run away, because everything she does here, everything that could come, does not fit at all with her moral values.

There he is. He must have taken the footpath under the bridge.

Marlis approaches him and tries to perceive as much as possible with all her senses. Upright gait. Clear gaze.

"Hello."

Should she shake his hand?

But that takes care of itself, because he immediately takes the lead.

"Hello Marlis."

So the three usual kisses between friends.

It smells good.

What was she thinking, holding out her hand to him?

You stroll along the lake in the direction of Züri-Horn.

Marli's nervousness has subsided and she hardly feels the cold anymore. How quickly you get used to some things.

She is taken with the stranger. He seems educated, is well-read and her spirituality doesn't seem to scare him off. Not even when she confesses that this is her first "casual date" and that she has never had an affair before in her life.

He asks her how she imagines a first erotic meeting, but Marlis has no idea. She has no experience. Anything she could suggest would be taken from a book.

So Marlis talks about the state of her marriage and in the next moment is annoyed that she started it. She catches herself talking more than she had intended.

She wanted to listen and now it must look like she is looking for a listener.

Embarrassing.

Especially since they agreed that it was not about friendship, but about non-binding sex. Whereby Marlis is no longer sure whether they really agreed or whether she didn't just agree to everything in the e-mails. Marlis is also not at all sure who agreed: the saint or the whore.

Who is she now?

Marlis has no idea, she only senses that this casual date has long since ceased to be about sex - about the decent one or the slut. It's about something bigger: the courage to at least try to break out of the relentless clockwork of everyday life and confront her repressed darker parts. The boards beneath Marli's feet wobble and at times the floor pulls away from her. She lurches.

No matter how much Marlis tells, how much she talks, the topic of what happens next cannot be avoided.

The stranger has taken a liking to her and proposes a game. A dominant-devote encounter. A game in which he can approach Marli's limits and carefully sound out where she stands. Nothing concrete. Seeing what comes and how things develop. At the beginning, perhaps a blindfold.

It's getting serious, but Marlis could still shift into reverse. She doesn't. Instead, she begins to play a role. She plays submissive and asks when and where she should show up the next day.

The stranger names a hotel in the Niederdorf and gives clear instructions regarding the time and her wardrobe: high-heeled shoes, skirt, blouse, coat, stockings - no matter if strapless or with garter, in no case panties. He appreciates her bust through the coat and adds, "And above all, no shirt or bra."

The clear and yet heartwarming announcements excite Marlis.

Add to that the idea that tomorrow she will buy stockings. Not pantyhose or emergency underwear, but very special stockings and a garter belt. While Marlis does have some, albeit few, pieces of erotic lingerie in her closet, she hasn't used them in years. She saw no occasion.

Then suddenly and as if out of nowhere comes the reliever.

The stranger explains the course of the encounter to Marlis. He explains to her what a safeword is and that then the game is over immediately and everyone has to leave their role.

He explains to her the term "consensual," which means that there should always be mutual agreement about everything that happens.

And he explains to her that the game has a beginning and a clearly defined end.

Marlis understands. She nods and agrees.

She is polite and confirms the appointment, even though she already knows she will cancel. She will have a headache or something to do with Mark.

It was the term "game" and "rules" that made all the desire in Marlis contract. Of course, she understands that a safe framework is needed when moving on unfamiliar terrain.

But that's not what she was looking for.

Safety rules, agreements, mutual sparing and consideration, that was there throughout their marriage.

No, in her whole life. Her whole life has been a comfort zone, and now she wants to try something new and ends up right back there.

What does a game with a clear beginning and neatly defined end have to do with devotion? It's a project, but not a sexually enriching experience.

This is not what Marlis was looking for. She is longing for something else.

She has wished to dissolve, as it says in the middle of the quote from the Pauline Réage: "In these moments you resemble the clouds, the waters, are a blowing in the wind."

Nor was there anything about collusion in the book that inspired them to go on the date. He gave the direction, and he led. He was sensitive and read her heart. He also explored her boundaries, but yet not with a safeword. A man should feel how far he can go.

Marlis will have to get drunk.

She will open a bottle of the exquisite red wine that Sisyphus has procured for special occasions.

Today is such an event.

What was she actually thinking?

Did she think she could have a submissive affair just like that?

Was she hoping that would solve her problems???

What a naive thought it was that devotion could develop with a stranger and out of nowhere.

Of course, Marlis has often wished that Sisyphus would be more active, that he would take her.

But what would she have done if he had taken her?

Preferably while she was still peeling potatoes or cleaning lettuce.

Nothing would have happened.

She would have found an excuse: "Mark is still awake," or "I have to get up early. " Even on a weekend when Mark is with her mother and they both have endless time, she would have thought of something to prevent the fulfillment of her desire.

And let's assume that Sisyphus would have actually gathered all his courage. That he would have grabbed her presently and from his center with a completely open heart, put her on the kitchen table and pulled the top off her body.

With such passion, she would have been afraid. She would have feared that a button might come off or leftovers from the salad on the plates might come into contact with the cheap shirt from H&M.

Marlis realizes that there would always have been something and Sisyphus, no matter what he would have done, would never have had a chance. Regardless of how daredevil or courageous he would have been.

What is she thinking about Sisyphus anyway? He has been missing for over a week.

Earlier at the lake, the man from the Internet. He was charming and intelligent. She could

converse with him and felt she was understood. He was polite, considerate and good smelling. Besides, he wasn't bad looking.

What turned her off was not the man, nor the game.

That was just another excuse.

In truth, Marlis is afraid to leave the comfort zone. After all, she has no control outside this small, petty area.

She would have to trust and let go. But she has been avoiding that all her life. She suddenly realizes that when it comes to control, there is no difference between her and her mother. Fear has always been in both their lives.

Marlis wants nothing more than to be forced to let go.

But no one is willing to do that. Not even a dominant stranger on a "casual date".

For where there is compulsion and violence, there can be no devotion.

It would be rape.

That's where the cat bites its own tail.

It takes two to devote, and as bitter as it is, Marlis must admit to herself that, at least until now, she has been the sole preventer of the fulfillment of her desires.

"The rest is the hard, incomprehensible life that has been prepared for us and that we prepare for each other," reads the quote from Réage that captivated Marlis at the beginning of her adventure.

We make life difficult for each other - it is not the unknown and his extinguishing explanation, it is not Sisyphus and his escape, it is not her mother or whoever. In all cases Marlis bears, at least half, the responsibility for her hard, incomprehensible life.

Only half?

No. More. Marlis could change her life. She could take the right to shape her destiny at any time. She could instantly stand up to the sneering grimace of everyday life.

From this perspective, what began as an attempt at a sexual adventure evolves into an existential crisis. It is no longer about a casual date, it is about her life: the repetitions - her running away. The persistence in rigidity.

But what does it mean to be alive?

Was the encounter at the lake life, or was it an escape?

Marlis feels that she doesn't need a meeting in a dreary hotel. She wants to feel waves and

surrender to an inner storm tide. But it doesn't need a man for that: no stranger and no Sisyphus. For that it needs Marlis.

But she had already disappeared long before she met Sisyphus.

There is something shattering about this truth, as all illusions that a change in circumstances could change her life for the better dissolve. What remains is the painful realization that the key to letting go lies solely within her.

It is only her decision to defy the repetitions of hard, incomprehensible life and, in an act of rebelliousness, to throw sand into the gears of routine.

It is not circumstances or others that put pressure on her - she creates her constraints herself.

And isn't it true that she has long since escaped from the intimacy between her and Sisyphus into the role of an overprotective mother?

From this perspective, she can even understand Sisyphus' escape: He had no choice but to leave her. Much longer than he left her, she had already left herself.

And who likes to live with a sleeve!

It is not Sisyphus who has fled, she is on the run.

Already their whole life.

Self-awareness is the first step, and Marlis suspects that, if she doesn't want to become embittered, there is much ahead.

But today she will get drunk and probably smoke the pack of cigarettes. She puts on the CD with Verdi's "La Traviata".

Isn't that also about letting go?

Then Marlis dares to do what in her world is far more dangerous than a casual date. She turns up the volume. All the way. She doesn't care what the neighbors think. Even when smoking on the terrace, she deliberately leaves the door open. Later and properly drunk, she even sings along: *Libiamo ne'lieti calici.*

Suddenly she feels a sense of gratitude for Sisyphus' escape.

Not an effusive thanks, as with a gift, rather it is a form of respect.

He made a move.

They could have talked for a long time and nothing would have happened. Marlis knows that you have to force them to change.

Your inert Sisyphus has moved.

He took the first step.

Marlis continues to drink. She opens a second bottle and feels that for years she hid behind Sisyphus, a strange spirituality and her yoga. She didn't want to take responsibility and hoped that a greater power would do her job. Without her intervention and as painlessly as possible, her control was to be transformed into surrender or burned forever.

Marlis is sure: Nothing would have moved if Sisyphus hadn't taken the first step. They would sit here and empty the same bottle of wine. But then she would admonish him to turn down the music. For the sake of the neighbors.

Now something is going on, and the neighbors are so indifferent to her.

She will empty this bottle, maybe another, then she will sleep.

Long and into the day, because right now there is no one she needs to take care of.

No one but themselves.

Therefore, it is little wonder that Marlis overlooked the message that Sisyphus left on the answering machine during their date.

Mumbai.

Indian airports all have the same smell. It's the cleaning agent or disinfectant, or they put something in the air conditioning. In terms of aroma, there is no difference between Goa and Mumbai, only in terms of size.

From the gate, Sisyphus walks what feels like a kilometer to the imposing arrivals hall. He has taken the evening flight and wonders how an airline can be named after a beer: Kingfisher Airlines.

Fearing that he would run into Marlis, he did not return until three days after her departure from Arambol. This led to new, more serious concerns, because he expected that the landlords would have reported the scooter stolen or missing.

Despite his escapades and the attempt to break conventions, Sisyphus has remained a correct

and fearful person in his character traits. One who expects disasters around every corner. On a secret level, this united him with Marlis, even if he would have protested vehemently against it.

But nothing happened. He returned the scooter, paid three days in arrears, and in the end was almost disappointed that the landlady did not approach him about Marlis, his disappearance, Mark, or whatever. It was business as usual. Everyone was courteous, and as long as the rupee bills changed hands, no one asked awkward questions.

From Candolim, he took a cab to the airport and, to his own amazement, was not even upset when he learned that the Mumbai flight was delayed for over an hour. Now he is hurrying through the arrivals hall of Chhatrapati Shivaji Airport toward the exit. Something inside him senses: I have arrived. India. Finally.

He has also come to terms with breaking away from his life and has made an inner peace, at least temporarily: He feels that he is not on the run from Marlis, but on the way to himself.

Sisyphus steps out of the terminal, and all at once the airport unit smell and the muted of the hall are gone. Smells, sultry heat. Indistinct voices intrude on him.

Hands reach for his luggage.

"Taxi sir?"

"Need Taxi?"

Horns. Colors. Foreign smells.

"My friend, come. Best Mumbai cab."

A porter pushes a cart loaded with suitcases and bags past, "Go, go, go."

Sisyphus wants to stop, to orientate himself, but this is not possible.

He is pushed. Incomprehensible sentences pelt him, hands reach for him.

"Where are you going?"

"Need hotel?"

Sisyphus fights his way to the cabs. Everything is disorderly and yet not chaotic. Behind the sequences, movements and gestures is a system unknown to him.

With or without air conditioning?

A driver pulls him to his car and demands an outrageously high price.

Sisyphus waves it off.

"Tell me your price?"

Sisyphus has no idea, but then he remembers that Shiva said something about prepaid.

"Always take prepaid cabs only".

He leaves the cursing driver, pushes himself against the stream of people back towards the terminal and buys a cab ticket to Colaba at a booth.

Then a guide directs him to the cab and holds out his hand, "Give me Rupee, sir."

Sisyphus laughs. He reaches into his pocket and presses a coin into his hand, but the guide shakes his head and looks angry.

"Welcome to Mumbai. Sir."

The driver honks, laughs, and the black and yellow Mumbai Tata cab pushes past hundreds of other cars onto the Western Express Highway.

Although it is night, things seem to retain their colors. For Sisyphus, they shine. Garish, loud, unregulated, and everything is in flux. Somehow.

It is Sisyphus' first contact with authentic India. Mumbai, he senses, will fascinate and devour him. As soon as he lands, he feels the insignificance of himself and his search in the never-resting sea of people.

His escape journey from Candolim to Arambol had something powerful and calm about it. It resembled a Bruce Springsteen ballad. Mumbai is techno and reminds him of "Trainspotting" by Sumo.

He rolls down the window and looks into a night that is not a night.

An endless highway. People work and sleep right on the side of the road. Everything happens close together. An anthill. Sisyphus thinks: just a few meters further, out of sight, they will make love. Next to cars, buses, trucks. Horn OK Please.

An indescribably dense feeling sets in: Life, sex, death.

The driver speeds at breakneck speed and turns briefly to Sisyphus: "Pray to God and trust your driver."

Then he reaches out of the window with an oily rag and wipes dead insects from the windshield. Visibility is no better, but the driver laughs: "That's Mumbai. Enjoy it. Which hotel, sir?"

"Bentley's."

"Good choice. You're lucky guy."

Sisyphus doesn't know whether he should think the driver is still psyched or has already lost his mind. He knows no red lights, no lanes. He speeds, honks, and comments on the route: Bandra, Dadar Station - where the long-distance cabs start, Mumbai Central Railway, and finally, after what feels like forty minutes of anxiety, Colaba.

"Here we are, sir."

He looks at his watch and grins, "My second best time from the airport. 26 minutes."

Sisyphus is drenched in sweat, wide awake and can't remember ever feeling so alive. The tour was a heady mix of speed, fascination and fear.

That's enough: No more speed, I'm almost there.

Sisyphus' organ of balance needs time to settle down. It also seems that during this daring ride, all the paranoid fears he still had when he handed in the scooter have finally fallen by the wayside.

He thinks about his Zurich cycling game and how silly this would be. If he lived in Mumbai, he would have to come up with something new. But maybe he wouldn't need any games at all.

The room is huge and bare, without air conditioning, but with a fan and double bed. Freshly made. A neon lamp on the ceiling. Few pieces of furniture. Very basic, but clean. Sisyphus even has a television. Only to his private bathroom he has to cross a small corridor.

Sisyphus lies down on the bed, then zaps through the Indian programs. Soaps like at home. He gets stuck on an Indian doctor series and thinks: like Grace Anatomy. Marlis' favorite. Always on Mondays, she can't miss it.

Marlis. She is far away. So far that she doesn't even reach his conscience.

He showers, feels himself and India: hard and sensual.

Then get dressed and go to Café Leopold. Shiva recommended it to him: "The most unfriendly waiters, the worst haka noodles, but an authority."

Sisyphus steps out of the hotel into the night. Right, left, right again, then he's on Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg toward Leopold's.

There it is again: sounds, smells, colors. Warm moist dust.

It's crowded and he pushes his way through the masses.

On the right, merchants presenting their goods in shop windows and stores. On the left, facing the street, the poorer with stalls.

In between traffickers: traffickers and traffickers in human beings.

Sisyphus is offered women, men, children and drugs. But also radios and carpets. Gold. The restless, loud energy captivates him so much that he needs almost twenty minutes for the short distance.

Café Leopold: a large, unair-conditioned hall. Mosaics on the walls, whirring fans. Sisyphus feels the patina of many years: travelers, intellectuals, Mumbai Mafia, Shantaram.

He drinks Fosters and the noodles are not as bad as he thought. But he did take non veg and not only vegetables like Shiva. He sits alone, and this time Sisyphus enjoys being alone. He is awake and eager to see what comes next. What doors will open.

An American toasts him, Sisyphus toasts back.

Sisyphus is alive. It seems that the walls that previously separated him from the others are crumbling. Even his decency, of which he was always so proud, and some of his morals have evaporated. He knows that tomorrow he will go to Ramesh, the banker guru.

That's all that matters.

The more he thinks about it, the less he understands what he is actually looking for. In the end, it doesn't matter.

Now he sits in the Leopold and observes: Westerners who make money or art. Indian intellectuals from film, television or advertising. Spiritual seekers and those like him who don't even know what they are looking for.

A year ago, Islamic bombers fired machine guns at Leopold's. The Leopold's restaurant was a place where people were killed. Guests died. Unlike the cab ride, Sisyphus feels no fear. Today at the latest, with his flight to Mumbai, he has crossed too many borders to be afraid of abstract dangers.

What are shooting assassins vs. Sisyphus' jailbreak?

He refuses everyday life and refuses to roll his stone up the hill.

Not forever, but he takes an indefinite break.

He reflects on his actions, his task, his being.

Then he will consider whether to return to action.

Or never again.

Sisyphus orders another beer and dessert. After the first spoonful, he leaves it: too sweet.

It is midnight when he returns to the hotel. Next to the now-closed stalls, their owners are asleep . People from the countryside doing their thing, a table with books, apples or onions.

Mumbai - Bombay: live, love, sleep, die - all in the same place.

He likes the name Bombay better.

He sounds more massive, harder, but also more alive - more like he feels.

At the hotel, Sisyphus fetches a bottle of water from the floor refrigerator, then slumbers off

without masturbating.

He sleeps deeply and through the night for the first time in a long time. He has no nightmares or remorse.

It's amazing how quiet Mumbai is. Although he is in the middle of it, much quieter than Goa. Also, no crows wake him up just before dawn. The birds in Mumbai get up later, moreover, they chirp pleasantly.

Sisyphus takes a small breakfast: toast with British bitter orange marmalade and Nescafé. Although it is only a traveler's hotel, he feels like a traveler in colonial times. At least it has room service.

Sisyphus doesn't have to explain anything to the cab drivers. They know Ramesh, the Holy Man, and his morning prayer.

Another ride, this time during the day.

Honking. Pedestrians jump to the side. The cab turns into a traffic circle, then heads for Marine Drive. On the left, the Arabian Sea. Closed stalls, a children's carousel, people eating takeaways from their hands.

On the right, huge hand-painted movie posters. Kemps Corner, Peddler Road.

Sisyphus experiences his first Mumbai traffic jam. On a two-lane road, four cars crowd side by side. Between them is a donkey cart with steel beams.

Scolding and angry honking.

The beggars use the standing traffic. Children, mostly girls. Most of them younger than Mark. They stretch emaciated hands through the window and make a motion to their mouths with the other hand.

"Give me money. Hungry. Give Rupee."

Mothers in rags with children in their arms. Emaciated and blind. A man rolls up on a wooden board.

Sisyphus rummages in his pocket and hands out some coins. But there is no thanks, but there are suddenly more beggars. The cab is surrounded by beggars. Sisyphus shows his empty hands, the driver laughs and accelerates. But at the next traffic light it is similar. Again begging mothers, children. Hands reaching into the car, "Give Rupee. "

Where do they all come from?

The roadside is bustling with activity. Merchants open their stores and stalls, in between suits and women in bright saris. Then again, figures cloaked in rags, as in "Desert Planet.

Air-conditioned limousines with liveried chauffeurs and men with ties and collars in the back push past the cab. The rear curtains of the most elegant vehicles are drawn.

The driver points to a Mercedes, laughs and honks.

He turns left onto Nawroji Gamadia Road and stops near a house across from which Sisyphus spots several Westerners.

He asks if he should pick up Sisyphus again. And since he likes the driver, Sisyphus agrees on a time, shortly after the Satsang. The driver parks a few meters away, waves Sisyphus behind and starts cleaning his cab.

Across from Ramesh's house, about a dozen people are waiting: many foreigners, a few Indians, and a plump woman with flowers. She looks German.

One of the Indians addresses Sisyphus. He says that he organizes the Satsangs. No, of course not the Prayer, only the technology, because everything is recorded. MP3. Sisyphus can have a CD later.

The man asks if Sisyphus has been there before, if he knows Ramesh's teaching, if he has read a book and if he wants to ask something.

Sisyphus does not know. After a moment's hesitation, he does: "Yes."

If not now, when?

Around half past eight, everyone rushes across the street and crowds into the entrance. Few take the elevator, most run up the stairs. In front of the door to Ramesh's apartment a pile of shoes. Sisyphus also takes off his, then enters a room above the rooftops of Mumbai via the hallway.

Ramesh's living room.

Sisyphus imagined it differently. He was expecting at least something Disney spiritual like the Magic Park. But this is just a normal living room. Only the chairs and the larger recliner stand out. Fans whirr on the ceiling. Traffic noise seeps through the open windows.

The German-looking woman puts the flowers in a vase next to the recliner, and the man who approached Sisyphus on the street assigns him a seat and clips on a microphone.

Silence.

Then Ramesh enters: small, old. He walks stooped. Wide white pants and an Indian shirt. Poorly shaved, but full of presence.

He sits down, greets the visitors and looks into the room: two new ones.

He looks directly at Sisyphus. A sharp, almost piercing gaze. No, better: penetrating and yet full of compassion.

Ramesh gives an introduction to his concept: that there is no personal agent and therefore no pride and no guilt. That the impulses come from what he calls source, and again and again that this is only a concept, because the ineffable, the actual, knows no words.

He illustrates the difference between an ordinary person and saint, as he calls it, with an example of beggars.

The normal person, he says, considers. He looks at the faces, assesses, judges.

Are they begging gangs and scammers?

Should he rather donate the money to an organization?

The saint, on the other hand, does not think. He follows his impulses and gives or he does not give. With him it happens without judgment, without guilt and without pride.

The left hand does not know what the right hand is doing.

Again Sisyphus is too slow. While he is still thinking about how he gave this morning, Ramesh has fixed him.

He asks about his work.

"Bank. Networker."

"I see. And are you happy with your work?"

Sisyphus does not know and believes that he has escaped for the time being.

Ramesh reassures him: "It's just a job. Sometimes it's this way and sometimes it's that way. Depending on whether the ego gets what it wants."

Then he asks, Sisyphus, if he has a family, wife and children, and how he came to India.

Sisyphus roughly relates what happened to make him leave his family in Goa, at least for the time being. His voice has a defiant undertone. Sisyphus notices that Ramesh senses that he is struggling with himself.

"I see. For now. Now you don't know what to do? "

"Right."

"Is that why you're here? Are you looking for the answer to whether you should return?"

"Yes. Certainly that, too."

"And did she give you Mumbai?"

"Not until now."

"The impulse that made you run away came from the source. You followed it. But society, your wife and son, will not judge you by it. Maybe she will divorce you. Now you are looking for a way to avoid the consequences of your impulse. You are running away again. "

"Can I stop it?"

"No. If it's going to happen, you can't control it any more than you could control your first escape."

"What can I do then? How can I make the right decision? "

"The question presupposes a decider, a free will. But there is no agent. This reminds me of a story I once read somewhere: A man found himself in a hopeless situation. He was hanging only by his fingers on a vertical rock face. After a few moments, he cried out, 'Is there anyone up there? I need help!' He heard a voice saying, 'Yes, here I am.' The man shouted back, 'Who are you?' The voice replied, 'I am God, I will help you. Do exactly what I tell you.' The man was relieved and said, 'Okay, I will do whatever you say.' God said, 'Just let go, you are safe.' After a moment, the man called out, 'Is there anyone else up there?'"

Laughter.

Then Ramesh adds, "At some point in life, we reach a point where we really have to trust."

Although not a believer by any means, Sisyphus asks, "Why does God answer at all? Doesn't he know that the man will not let go?"

"It's just a metaphor, because no one knows what comes after letting go. It's just a concept. Can you let go? Can you let go that you got married? That you left your family? Can you accept that something shook you up and took you out of your dream? "

"No. Not without understanding my actions."

"You think if you could justify your actions, the consequences would go away?"

"Then I can explain."

"Who would care?"

"My wife."

"It's true: Acceptance happens when understanding comes. Your understanding. Do you understand yourself?"

"No. That's exactly my problem. I don't understand myself."

"This is the beginning of every quest. Now you're struggling with the question of whether there is free will, a way to determine destiny."

"Yes."

"Can you follow the impulse that brought you to Mumbai?"

"I don't know. First of all, what do I tell my wife: I had an impulse, probably the stupidest of my life?"

"If you feel like you need to say that, say it."

"You can't do that, she would never understand."

"Then your fate is that your wife does not understand you. Because regardless of where the action comes from, and no matter how you explain it, you will suffer the social consequences. You can struggle with it or accept it and let it go."

Sisyphus thinks of a quote from Albert Camus. But he doesn't bring it together, besides, he doesn't want to make a name for himself, and he certainly doesn't want to argue with Ramesh. The text is also about letting go. But the man refuses, and therefore he is accused of blasphemy.

Ramesh closes his eyes briefly and Sisyphus is glad when he turns to the other newcomer. He has been sweating and at times he has started to stutter.

Nevertheless, he does not agree with Ramesh's concept at all.

His values and also his sense of responsibility are too great for that. A source, a doer, outside of him, that seems strange to him.

Sisyphus does not want to blame anything on others or God. He wants to face himself and seeks a counterpart.

For him, it is about confronting the inevitable, the consequences of his actions and his responsibility. He is also hanging over the abyss, but for sure he will not call out to God.

His action began when he jumped over his shadow, took the motor scooter and left his family. Now he is on the run. But he can't run forever or sit quietly and wait for the obscure source to send him new ideas.

He must realize that he will not get any answers from the outside, certainly not from a guru. He has to decide for himself how to proceed. Ramesh's ideas and concept sounded interesting, but on a practical level, at least for now, they don't get Sisyphus anywhere.

Again he is dissatisfied, and a feeling spreads that he already knows from Arambol: the hungry tiger in search of food. Sisyphus' food is truth.

But if there is none - if there is nothing behind all the appearances?

When everything is just a hall of mirrors? A deception?

Then at least he wants to know that and live sincerely, without lying to himself, with that certainty.

After a short chanting together, the satsang is over. Most of the visitors bow and ritually touch Ramesh's feet. Sisyphus doesn't want to do that, he doesn't want to bow to anyone, god or guru, outside himself. Instead, he buys a book by Ramesh titled: 'Your Head in the Tiger's Mouth'. Sisyphus notices photos of the young Ramesh lying around: an athletic man posing as a discus and javelin thrower. He must have been damn vain.

Walking downstairs, Sisyphus wonders how often some of the visitors come to see Ramesh. The meeting felt familiar and he had the feeling that many had known each other for months. Later, Sisyphus will learn that some visitors sat in Ramesh's satsang for years, waiting for the master to issue them a certificate of their enlightenment. But he stubbornly refused.

Sisyphus' driver stands next to the cab and smokes. Seeing him like this, Sisyphus is overcome with the feeling that he knows the man. Not personally, but the facial features, in fact everything about him, activates something in Sisyphus.

His appearance and physique resemble a character from a science fiction movie. He could be a twin brother of the actor. The dark, slightly greasy hair combed back. The mustache. A noticeable belly line and a sweaty shirt. Plus the look of the sympathetic thug.

The character was called Solo and was a character in a computer game. The place of action was a large Indian city, probably Bombay. Sisyphus doesn't remember exactly. Only the title he has in mind: "Nirvana - Hunt in Cyberspace."

It's one of those movies that Marlis would never watch.

Solo was a small-time crook and in the beginning the same scene repeated itself several times. He's on the phone making some kind of deal, then a hitman comes into the room and shoots him. This repeats itself over and over until the viewer understands that it's a video game and Solo, for his part, has to shoot faster at some point to get to the next level.

But Solo doesn't feel like it anymore. He no longer wants to hang on the joystick of a stoned gamer, but wants to step out of virtual reality into the real world. Solo wants to act independently and take responsibility.

In the film, Solo, the Italo-Bombay mobster, develops a personality and begins to think his own thoughts. He turns his head as if looking for something, and suddenly he seems to see the camera

watching him and controlling his game.

He steps closer and asks who is there, who is steering him.

The programmer flinches, startled.

His character is alive and starts to argue with him: "Hey, show yourself, I don't feel like playing anymore. Always the same. Always repetition. First-person shooter shit."

He confronts the programmer with questions and says that he doesn't like his role anymore and certainly doesn't want to kill. He has his own ideas and wants nothing but to get out into the real world.

Sisyphus feels similarly, and therefore the solution to his dilemma cannot lie in an all-controlling source or in a god, but only in himself. He feels like the character in the game who starts to come alive and questions the whole construction.

But Sisyphus doesn't know where to turn. Which programmer should he rant with?

Then he remembers that in the movie there was a story similar to the one Ramesh told. Only it ended differently. Most importantly, it did not involve God or gurus. To Sisyphus, it seems a more real metaphor. A story of this world, without an afterlife and without all the Ramesh-Shiva-Advaita ideas.

A man is fleeing from a tiger. He jumps over a slope and holds on to a root with his left hand.

He looks up and sees the hungry tiger lying down, waiting for his prey to tire.

Then the man looks down and sees that a tiger is creeping up there as well.

The man hangs between two tigers.

Anyone could eat him, and whatever he decides, there is no way out, death is certain. Everyone knows that, but the picture brings it home once again: In the end, we will die. All of us. Though few will be eaten by tigers, but we will choose life. Dead is dead.

The man could let go, just as God asks in the other story. He could let go and surrender to his fate.

Only: This man does not let go. Rather, he develops an incredible strength. A strength and rebellion mixed with a mocking contempt for the ridiculousness of life. He begins to rebel against the source, God, and death. He rebels against the ultimately inevitable consequence of life.

The man holds on to the root and finds that a small mouse begins to nibble on it. It tastes good. The mouse looks at him, but it is out of his reach.

Therefore, it is only a matter of time before the man will fall. He sees his fate with perfect clarity and cannot avoid it. But the man fights on. He says to himself: Now more than ever.

He turns his gaze from the root and looks to the right in the other direction.

There he sees a wild strawberry within reach. He picks it and puts it in his mouth.

How sweet she tastes!

Sisyphus laughs: That's it. It's as simple as that.

Now.

That is the truth. There is only one moment, and it is now.

Sisyphus laughs louder. Apparently without reason, but then the Bombay Mafiosi cab driver laughs along with him.

Both laugh. Without knowing what about.

Sisyphus' driver takes detours. Big loops. He's doing a special Sisyphus-Mumbai-Bombay sightseeing tour. Sisyphus knows he's getting screwed over beyond measure right now. But he doesn't care. At this moment, this is his wild strawberry.

And his koan?

The decision he made of his own free will: willingly, consciously and with the responsibility for all future consequences?

The one that drove him to Mumbai?

No matter.

The way his strawberry tastes, the way he laughs, and the way his inner ground sways, he seems to be on the verge of a realization.

The driver steps on the gas, honks his horn and flashes a greasy Mumbai hoodlum grin as he chauffeurs Sisyphus through the red-light district near the main train station: "Whatever you want. Hot women, cracked iPhones, the latest DVDs and saints. Where in the world is that so close together."

At the hotel, he wants to know if Sisyphus is going back to Ramesh tomorrow, but he waves it off, and it seems the driver is disappointed.

Maybe because of the tour he misses, maybe because Sisyphus does not appreciate Ramesh.

Who knows.

Sisyphus gives a more than generous tip.

He goes to his room. He has to take a shower and change his clothes. Despite all the fascination, his Mumbai-Bombay gets him down.

It is not the loudly chaotic, the never-ending flow of people and vehicles that never really comes to a halt despite intermittent stalls, but the dust, dirt and sultriness that mercilessly gnaw away at beings attuned to mediocrity.

He understands Shiva's phrase, "India is good for the soul but bad for the body."

Sisyphus has no plan. The last remnants of his plans have disappeared in the mouth of hungry tigers, and his mind, which could create new ideas, is shattered at the idea of a wild strawberry.

It is now time.

In the afternoon, Sisyphus strolls from the hotel, past the Taj Mahal Palace, to the Gateway of India.

He buys a postcard and, although he never liked souvenirs, a snow globe in which artificial flakes trickle over a cheap, plastic miniature of the structure.

Snow in India.

He acts without thinking.

It seems that his unconscious has decided to return. Only that the decision has not yet reached the area of his brain reserved for deliberate action. The last impulse is missing.

Why else would he acquire souvenirs?

Sisyphus sees the launches to Elephanta Island and buys a ticket for the crossing.

He takes a small boat that does not inspire confidence and chugs off. Children sell Coke. Tourists take pictures. The monotonous pounding of the engine and the rhythmic swaying of the boat make Sisyphus feel calmer once again. He glides into an intermediate realm where relaxation and dozing are inseparably mixed.

Let go.

The passage passes Butcher Island with its oil loading platforms and reaches the jetty of Elephanta Island in a wide arc after about an hour.

When the boat's engine stops, there is absolute silence on the pier. It is a silence that Sisyphus has not noticed for weeks. The few sounds that nevertheless reach his ears come from fishermen repairing their boats, which are lying on dry land.

At first, it seems to him that his hearing has been damaged in Mumbai. But as he climbs the countless stairs, past the merchants, the familiar intrusive voices reassure him.

Behind a ticket booth and the gate to the caves, it is quiet again.

Only the hissing of countless monkeys interrupts the peace. Sisyphus observes how trusting and

at the same time aggressive they are. They try to steal food from the visitors and grab a woman's long hair. They show their teeth and hiss threatening sounds. They are sacred monkeys, temple monkeys that, according to Hindu mythology, can take on any shape and fly.

Sisyphus grimaces and also shows his teeth.

He stands in the main cave and is impressed by how the builders dug into the rock 1800 years ago and carved out a huge lingam in the artificial cavity.

He tries to feel what the builders and miners thought, and marvels at how they created the figures at the same time while hollowing: Countless sculptures and representations from the stories about God Shiva alternate with frescoes from the Kama Sutra.

These were artists who dug into the mountain and did not give up despite all odds. They created a gigantic cave, thirty meters deep and four meters high, leaving the symbol of male creation in the center.

This was more than an impulse from the source. It was hard work. For many years they struggled with the mountain without giving up. They needed a strong faith, a goal and confidence.

Against such efforts, Sisyphus' stone, to which he has given the name Marlis in the meantime, seems small.

He looks up at the ceiling of the cave and contemplates the ornaments on the walls. What is carved in stone will certainly outlive him, Marlis and Mark.

Already in the anthill of Mumbai, Sisyphus got an inkling of his insignificance. Here it imposes itself again in the form of his temporal limitation: He is no more than a transient in the caravanserai commonly called life.

He could complain and grumble about his life. But he could also act and enjoy a strawberry now and then. It is only up to him.

What does it matter if he has free will and consciously chooses something?

Even the consequences of his actions seem meaningless in the shadow of transience.

Who knows what free will is and where our impulses to act come from?

This can be the source, God, education, neurological processes. In the end it doesn't matter, because even in the matrix the consequences stick to you.

However, thinking about the fruits of action makes even less sense than thinking about free will. On a large scale, history is written by victors, and on a small scale, it likewise arises only in retrospect.

No one can see into the future, and so man hangs steadily between two tigers, while the mouse

of mortality nibbles at the root.

Of course, you can think about the consequences of your actions. In the end, however, things usually turn out differently than one imagines.

Marriage. Children. Mortgage. He never imagined where this would lead: tsunami fantasies and then his escape. Never did Sisyphus believe he would become the bore he was before his escape, and just a few days ago he couldn't imagine he would evolve into who he is now.

But what is it about if not free will, conscious choices, and responsibility for the consequences?

It's all about sticking with it and following your own goals, no matter how absurd and unattainable they may seem. Just like the creators of these caves.

This reminds Sisyphus of his network full of data streams. It has to flow. The contents, the orders, courses, love letters and messages about the death of a colleague are nothing but the foam on the surface. Short-term ephemeral appearances that, after their appointed time, end up in a virtual wastebasket and disappear forever.

Perhaps individual memories remain. But they, too, fade with time. They become misty dull until they finally dissolve.

Only the river remains. Perpetually, always anew, sensations, images and fragments will rise from it, to be absorbed and washed away again after a certain time.

Mumbai traffic.

Sisyphus' koan cannot be whether he ever freely chose and was willing to bear all the consequences.

It is much simpler: he only has to ask himself when he got tired and why he gave up, at what point he resigned.

The caves, the lingam and the ornaments, all this would not exist if the workers had given up and discouraged. They kept going. Piece by piece. Laboriously. They felt the resistance of the rock and yet never lost heart.

They had a goal and certainly a plan, yet each blow of a hammer was done out of the moment. Such instantaneous action, the now, knows a direction but no right or wrong. It knows only the current challenge and does what must be done: Hammer blow after hammer blow. And perhaps at some point the feeling of the strawberry will set in.

Maybe.

Right or wrong, values and decency, on the other hand, are the tigers between which Sisyphus,

Marlis and Mark ground themselves. They had the illusion of being able to escape.

Hungry tigers, however, have patience for a human lifetime.

The brokenness and the personal dilemmas will never leave Sisyphus. They are part of being human. What he can do, however, is to focus more on the wild strawberry from now on, rather than suffering from the past or fearing the future.

Once he loses the fear of falling, the strawberry can taste delicious.

Sisyphus can decide whether he will remain a tormented man, laboriously pushing the burden of everyday life before him, or whether he will become the shaper and creator of his destiny. But even this is not a real decision, because a long time ago he had already chosen Marlis. He also has a son waiting for him.

His jailbreak was needed by Sisyphus; for the rigidity of habit would not be broken in everyday life. Also, his life required direction, for without a goal, no one would take the effort to artfully carve out a mountain or face the daily madness.

Now Sisyphus has to keep at it, just like the builders of Elephanta Island, who could never have guessed that their creation would become a world heritage site almost two thousand years later.

Inaction paralyzes. Action makes alive and free.

To the acting one is the strawberry, the fearful one will see only tiger.

Back in Mumbai, Sisyphus googles in an Internet café for the sentence by Albert Camus, which he did not want to think of with Ramesh: "One asks him to jump. He can only answer that he does not properly understand that this is not evident. He only wants to do what he correctly comprehends. He is assured that this is the sin of pride - but he does not understand the concept of sin; that hell may await him in the end - but he does not have enough imagination to picture this strange future; that he will lose eternal life - but this seems trivial to him. He is supposed to acknowledge his guilt. He, however, feels innocent. In reality he feels only this his irrevocable innocence. It is it which allows him everything. So he demands from himself to live only with what he knows, to settle only with what is and not to switch on what is not certain. One gives him to the answer, nothing is certain. But that is, after all, a certainty. He has to deal with it: he wants to know if it is possible to live irrevocably."

This not only strikes Sisyphus' heart, but reconciles his mind with Ramesh's teaching. It is a spiritual rinse aid.

At first, he could do little with Ramesh's Advaita.

Nevertheless, Ramesh has forced Sisyphus on his way. He has reminded him that there is a splinter in his head, something long pushed aside. Something that, through his outburst, is now powerfully pushing into the light.

Sisyphus had forgotten it: the guru in himself.

Ramesh did nothing but give Sisyphus a push. Probably that is exactly the role of a master: to remind his students of what is always already in them.

Didn't Ramesh himself emphasize that everything was just a concept?

Sisyphus understands the misunderstanding and why some spend years with a guru: They are attached to the concept.

But that is also only one of the tigers, and the more you fixate on the tigers, the more you lose sight of the actual, the strawberry.

You move away from yourself.

Sisyphus' search for his self has begun, and he will need time to review his life.

What is true and comes from it?

What can he stand behind and what are concepts, learned programs or fixed ideas of others?

To find out who he is and what he wants, he will have to examine each of his ideas.

This can last a lifetime.

He can't keep Marlis and Mark waiting that long.

It begins to dawn and the blue hour displaces the day.

Sisyphus lies on the bed in his hotel and watches the slow rotation of the fan.

Nothing disturbs.

Silence. No thoughts. Probably for the first time in his life, real silence. The brooding has reached a limit beyond which it can go no further.

He feels his breath and the cyclically repeating breath of air on his skin.

Birds chirp outside the window and now and then he hears footsteps in the hallway. The toilet flushes with a time delay.

He can endure this state for about an hour, then he takes his cell phone and books a seat for tomorrow's evening flight to Zurich.

Sisyphus builds ahead.

He is afraid that once he has Marlis on the phone, most of his regained courage will leave him.

The strawberry, free will and letting go are not simple matters.

Suddenly he understands Ramesh's metaphor of the man calling out to God.

God does not ask him to let go of the root to which he is attached, but he asks him to say goodbye to all ideas and concepts. From everything that has nothing to do with himself.

It is a disposing of prejudices, knowledge and the alleged certainties; of everything that one usually does.

Only when the head is free can you find and recognize yourself.

That feels more threatening than dying.

Sisyphus suspects what lies ahead of him. Especially because even much lesser challenges push him to his limits.

The most current is to call Marlis.

He knows that if part of his journey is choosing Marlis and his son, he must take responsibility for the direction of the journey.

Since he has avoided any contact with Marlis up to now, he cannot suspect that a lot has moved with her as well. He dials the joint number and is sure that he is acting of his own free will. After all, he could hang up at any time.

First the dial tone, then the answering machine answers.

Sisyphus hangs up.

Two minutes later he calls again and leaves a short message.

"Hello Marlis. I'll be back. My flight lands the day after tomorrow at 7:00 a.m. We'll have to talk. I look forward to seeing you again. Bye, Sisyphus."

He hangs up and takes a breath.

It has decided: He returns and will bear the consequences of his life. True responsibility, in which he is a shaper, not a driven one.

A good feeling flows through him and he believes that he can master the future.

Doubts belong to faith, and he feels them as well.

This time, however, he does not push them aside, but observes and accepts them. Faith and doubt, two hungry tigers.

He smiles at them, because from now on he wants to focus on the strawberry.

Sisyphus has never been so at peace with himself.

The long night with its mixture of wine and cigarettes has left Marlis with a buzzing head. She has woken up late, and when she goes to the kitchen to make a coffee, she notices the answering machine.

She listens to the message three times, so incomprehensible does the brevity of the message seem to her.

Okay: Sisyphus comes back. Just like that, without any reasoning.

As he disappeared, so he reappears.

What should she make of it?

As the blood alcohol has degraded, so has her respect for Sisyphus' escape. She does not know if she is happy that Sisyphus is coming back.

On the one hand yes, but on the other hand she is sure that everything has to change, that nothing can stay the way it was.

She is in the process of finding herself, and Sisyphus is the last person she needs in the process.

Also, there are things you don't do, no matter what the circumstances. You don't just run off and leave others without a message.

There are limits. This is one of them.

Nevertheless: Sisyphus' voice sounded clear - strong and powerful.

It is this special tone, something in the melody of his voice, that ensures that Marlis does not close herself off completely but, despite her indignation, allows a restrained openness. ver

On the evening of the realizations, Marlis resolved to feel more into her feelings and her body than to listen to her thoughts. The head lies, especially when it is full of ballast - overflowing with prejudices and concepts that are hostile to pleasure. When Marlis made this resolution, however, she had no idea that her first challenge was already waiting for her with Sisyphus' message.

Now her mind immediately wants to read Sisyphus the riot act. She feels anger and, when she feels deeper inside herself, fear. It is the fear that her life could become like before, that the clockwork of tiring repetitions will start ticking again. That as soon as Sisyphus is back, slowly but surely the old rut will set in again.

But she also suspects that it would be a waste of energy to call Sisyphus to account and take revenge for his escape. Rather, she will need all her rage and anger to resist the pull that is drawing her into her inner comfort zone and to stay awake.

She thinks about how they will meet. She doesn't want to think of anything. She can't just set

the table for breakfast or dinner.

Marlis decides that she does not want to be present for Sisyphus' return.

She will spend the night at her friend's house and Mark will stay an extra day with her mother. In the morning she will pick him up and take him to school. Then she will go home, meet with Sisyphus and they will talk.

Marlis writes an SMS: "Hello Sisyphus, Mark and I will not be there when you come. I will come Monday morning. We need to talk. Marlis. "

Just as Sisyphus' message unsettled Marlis, her message irritates Sisyphus.

The short sentences without flourishes feel distant. This is frightening, and they both hesitate fearfully, even though they have already overcome the most difficult challenge.

They have moved.

Now the insights still have to become suitable for everyday use.

Before his return flight, Sisyphus intoxicates himself one last time with the scent of the metropolis.

He walks to the top of Colaba, to the temple of the sacred monkeys, the Hanuman temple. Later he has a last beer at Café Leopold. His flight leaves at 1 a.m.

It is dark when he goes back to the hotel to get his things and take a cab.

On the opposite side of the street, a woman comes toward him. It is a prostitute. She pulls up her T-shirt so that Sisyphus can see her breasts. Sisyphus smiles and continues walking.

This time he did not lack courage, but he just did not feel the fascination of the wild strawberry. That is at the moment his return and the decision to stand by his family.

He has started to roll his stone back uphill and is looking forward to getting home.

Not as the comfortable Sisyphus, nor as the wild journeyman, but as a transformation of both. As one who went out to learn to fear and found himself.

This mood lasts all evening. Sisyphus smiles kindly as the Swiss stewardess greets the passengers with "Welcome home.

He is unshaven and has a clear, open look.

Zurich 7 a.m.

It is dark. Cold. Sleet.

In the underground train that takes him from the terminal to the exit, they celebrate welcome in Swiss: a cow moos from the conveyor belt.

Everything seems well-ordered, gray and lifeless to Sisyphus.

Everyone abides by unwritten rules. Runaways are not tolerated. You can eat off the floor, completely without the smell of disinfectants. Things seem sterile on their own.

Sisyphus tries to perceive it without judging. He succeeds only partially, because already a few minutes after landing he misses the lively chaos of Mumbai.

He takes a commuter train, then the bus that takes him to the suburb.

No one honks. No one laughs.

Sisyphus smiles.

He takes the direct path along the road to the terraced housing estate. The path where everyone can see him. A curtain is drawn.

Sisyphus' look is without guilt.

He does not meet anyone.

It's Sunday morning and people are busy with themselves. Sunday is daddy's day and possibly sex day. That's how it used to be.

Sisyphus smiles to himself. He can feel it on his face; the new facial expression is still unfamiliar.

The apartment is untidy, but that's what Sisyphus welcomes.

Marlis must have changed.

He unpacks, looks out the window, then goes for a jog.

Sisyphus has never been jogging in winter, but this time he enjoys the cold. He feels the burning of the air in his lungs, the forest floor. He runs and runs. Longer than ever: 90 minutes. His first strawberry in Switzerland.

Run, feel yourself, and keep asking, "Who am I?"

After showering, he goes to the kitchen and finds the note Marlis left:

"I got it from one of those books you don't like at all: 'A separation is to love what the wind is to fire. The strong it fans, the weak it blows out.' Let's see."

Sisyphus smiles.

Suddenly he realized that he was more than the snake, that the transformation that had taken place in him did not concern the outer shell, but himself, his soul, his being, which remained transformed yet himself, and that this was the real life.

...

He understood that just as he had passed through sleep and remained himself transformed, he would also pass through death, transformed and yet himself in a new form of existence.

Epic of Gilgamesh: Gilgamesh and Enkidu

Post-Scriptum

Sisyphus is convinced that he has returned to his family of his own free will and his own considerations.

But what if there is a great whole, God or the Source, that determines our destiny?

In this case, I would like to thank the source for all the inspiration for this novel. She did a coherent, if at times macabre from a human perspective, job.

It all began in 1498 with the bloody conquest of Goa, in which the future circumnavigator Ferdinand Magellan participated in the service of the Portuguese king.

The mix of Catholicism, Hinduism and Portuguese lifestyle that developed over the following centuries attracted hordes of hippies and dropouts to Goa's beaches in the 1970s. Some stayed and some founded yoga schools. Of these, a handful are among the best in the world.

Also, many restaurants have established themselves in Goa. One is Sublime near Candolim. The American-German-Indian chef, Chris, must have a direct line to the source; his salad dressing of walnuts and iced gorgonzola can inspire.

Of course, the source has also assisted authors Albert Camus, Paolo Coelho and Pauline Réage, and songwriter Marianne Faithfull with her muses.

Just like the director Rainer Werner Fassbinder, who used "Albatross" by Fleetwood Mac as end credits music in his TV series "Welt am Draht".

"World on the Wire", by the way, is the precursor of most science fiction movies dealing with virtual reality. The source at that time was called Simulacron-1 and was located in the "Institute for Cybernetics and Future Research".

The Wachowski brothers, creators of "Matrix," must have had one hell of a connection to it. After all, for Morpheus' inspiring monologues, a screenwriter needs an excellent line to the top or drugs of exceptional quality.

The same goes for Gabriele Salvatores, the creator of "Nirvana - Hunting in Cyberspace": his solo, based on Pinocchio, is a character that still impresses me.

Then there is Eric Burdon with his song "Tobacco Road" in the version of the record "War". In fact, after he can no longer hide, there is a transformation during which he dies to rise again stronger. Ten times stronger than before.

Sometimes it seems that the source creates defeats so that we learn to get up and move on. This was also the case with Giuseppe Verdi, whose "La Traviata" failed mercilessly with the audience at

its premiere in 1853, but today is one of the most successful operas in the history of music.

However, I would especially like to thank the source for the meetings and edifying conversations with Ramesh S. Balskar, who passed away on September 27, 2009. His body is gone, but the spirit of Advaita Vedanta lives on in his books and disciples.

One of the most important sentences of this teaching comes from the Bhagavad Gita and reads: "You have a right to action, but only to action itself. Not to its fruits. And do not persist in inaction."

The thing about action and fruits is one of the most interpreted passages in Hindu literature. The last sentence, "And do not persist in inaction," on the other hand, is rarely mentioned. To me, it seems to be the most important of all: For what else can we do but keep moving?

Keep at it, don't give up, despite all the crashes. It's not about the goal or the path, but only about the decision to set out.

By the way, you don't have to worry about Marlis, Mark and Sisyphus.

They will fight with each other and they will love each other. They will go their way. With each other.

The source promised me.

Source reference

Page 3

It's no longer a matter of reassuring yourself that the sea will remain calm, but of preparing to sail into stormy, uncharted waters.

*Disaster researcher Patrick Lagadec on the mindset of Ferdinand Magellan.
"Expecting the Surprising" in DIE ZEIT No. 16, 14.04.2011.*

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I want to tell you why you are here. You are here because you know something. Something you can't explain. But you feel it. You've felt it all your life, that there's something wrong with the world. You don't know what, but it's there. Like a splinter in your head that drives you crazy. This feeling has led you to me.

Morpheus in "The Matrix" quoted from [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matrix_\(movie\)](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matrix_(movie)).

Page 68, 128

You have a right to the action, but only to the action itself, never to its fruits. Do not let the fruits become the motive of your action! And don't be arrested to the inactivity.

Aurobindo, Sri (translation): Die Bhagavadgita, Herder, Freiburg i. Br. 1998, p. 56

Page 95, 101

Thank heaven for the moments when someone passes away in your arms and you in theirs. In these moments you resemble the clouds, the waters, are a blowing in the wind - the rest is the hard, incomprehensible life that has been prepared for us and that we prepare for each other, you just have to endure it.

Régine Deforges, Pauline Réage: Die O hat mir erzählt, Ullstein, Berlin 1994, p. 46

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This reminds me of a story I once read somewhere: A man was in a hopeless situation. He was hanging by only his fingers on a vertical rock face. After a few moments he cried out, "Is there anyone up there, I need help?" He heard a voice say, "Yes, here I am." The man called back, "Who are you?" The voice replied, "I am God, I will help you. Do exactly as I tell you." The man was relieved and said, "Okay, I will do whatever you say." God said, "Just let go, you are safe." After a moment, the man called out, "Is there anyone else up there?"

At some point in life, we reach a point where we really need to trust.

Balsekar, Ramesh S.: Enlightening Conversations, Lüchow, Freiburg i. Br. 1998, p. 302

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One asks him to jump. He can only answer that he does not understand correctly, that this is not evident. He wants to do only what he understands correctly. He is assured that this is the sin of pride - but he does not understand the concept of sin; that perhaps hell awaits him in the end - but he does not have enough imagination to imagine this strange future, that he would lose eternal life - but this seems trivial to him. He is supposed to acknowledge his guilt. He, however, feels innocent. In reality he feels only this his irrevocable innocence. It is it which allows him everything. So he demands from himself to live only with what he knows, to settle only with what is and not to switch on what is not certain. One gives him to the answer, nothing is certain. But that is, after all, a certainty. He has to deal with it: He wants to know if it is possible to live irrevocably.

Camus, Albert: The Myth of Sisyphus. Rowohlt, Reinbek 2010, p. 71 ff.

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Suddenly he realized that he was more than the snake, that the transformation that had taken place in him did not concern the outer shell, but himself, his soul, his being, which remained transformed yet himself, and that this was the real life. It no longer seemed desirable to him to always live in eternal youth. He understood that just as he had gone through sleep and remained transformed himself, he would also go through death, transformed and yet himself in a new form of existence.

Brockhoff u. Lauboeck: Als die Götter noch mit den Menschen sprechen. Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Herderbücherei, Freiburg, Basel, Vienna 1981. p. 144

Lyrics

Eric Burdon: Tobacco Road

I was born in a filthy dump my mother died and my daddy got drunk
and they left me here to die or grow in the middle of TOBACCO ROAD

I grew up in a prefabricated shack
when I went to high school they pulled the clothes off my back

the Lord above knows how much I loathe this mean old place called TOBACCO ROAD yes TOBACCO
ROAD let me tell you now TOBACCO ROAD talkin' 'bout a road yeh TOBACCO ROAD Lord!! talkin'
'bout your road talkin' 'bout my road talkin' 'bout TOBACCO ROAD talkin' 'bout a road

but it's home mm yes it is the only life I've ever known and the Lord knows how much I loathe

TOBACCO ROAD (road road road) talkin' 'bout your road (road road road) talkin' 'bout my road (road
road road) you know baby it's my home yeh (road road road) sister it's dirty and a-filthy (road road road)
it's crawlin' with rats and stinkin' of mice (road road road) but it's home yes it is and I'm goin` (road road
road) (road road road)

I'm gonna leave and get me a job and with the help and grace from above I'll
get myself some money yes I will I'll get rich I know

and then I'll bring it on back to TOBACCO ROAD Yes I will I'll bring
dynamite and I'll bring me a crane

and I'll blow it all up and start all over again and

I'll build up people I'll make it top yes I will I'll

be crackin' coal yes I will I'll be crackin' coal yes I will

and I'll keep the name yes I will and I'll never forget no I won't Ow-

Road road talkin' 'bout a road yeh talkin' 'bout your road talkin' 'bout my road talkin' 'bout TOBACCO
ROAD

you know I'm talkin' about it tellin' you about it Talkin' about it

It's gotta be changed It's gotta be changed

I've got to

change it

I have a dream everybody has a dream

I have a dream that I can change

it I have a dream that I can make it good once more

I have a dream it's mine it's yours and yours

Let me tell you 'bout my dream

Let me tell you 'bout my dream

We gotta to get it out we have to build it up tear it down build it up

I had a dream one night

I had a dream one night

I was taken to a place far away from TOBACCO ROAD far away from you from away from myself I had a dream I had a dream in my head I saw something it was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen in my life

I spoke out loud I said

You know you are the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen in my life

I heard a voice tell me I heard a voice say to me

it said "What do you want?"

I said I want to change it because it's wrong

I want to change it because I believe it could be better nad the voice said to me

What makes you think that you are man enough to change anything?

I thought for awhile and then I spoke out loud

and I said to it

I said Because I am a man

and I'm a part of the things that are wrong!!!!

And if this world is goin' to go on I gonna have to put it right!!!

and I know just by lookin' at you baby

that you're superior to me

and you can help me

give me the answer give me some answers!!!!

She turned around to me and you know what she said

she said I can help you

but there's something I want from you and it's a gift

in turn for the information I can give

I want a gift from you

I want a gift from you!!!

I tried my very best to look up to the sky but I realized I had no eyes

I was blind totally blind!!!!

I begin to get afraid

of the dark

I was afraid in

the darkness

but then I thought about my friends

who have no eyesight

I thought about the world they live in how much it's nice

there how good it made me feel

I was not afraid I

spoke up louder!!!!

I said listen You've got my eyesight there isn't much more I can give!!!

Now tell me how can I change it?

The voice said back

"oh yes there is

I want something more than your eyesight!"

I

thought for awhile

I thought what more could she want than my eyes?

Then the terrible feeling crept over me

as I began to realized that I understood what she was a-talkin' about

I screamed out loud

I said I'm not gonna give up my life

I'd love to give you my life

but I'm just a young man

with a wife

I have a wife and a baby

and if I die I know they'll cry

so please don't take my life then I heard my how say

It's alright baby I understand go ahead and do your thing!

there was nowhere I could run

I heard my father say

I understand son go ahead and give it it

is yours to give

then I heard my mother say the same thing

She said "Go ahead and give it away I gave to you and now it's time to give it to someone else!!!"

I was lost I was lost

no place to run no place to hide no place to run no place to hide

I felt it I knew it I could sense it I could feel it

creeping up from the tips of my toes

up my legs over my knees over my belly

cross my chest the black shadow of death

no place to run no place to hide

so I just laid there and I died died died!!!

it's dark there it's still there

but it's gotta be changed yes it has gotta be changed yes it

has opened my eyes once more

I breath again I walked again
I was ten times stronger
they gave it back to me
I'm gonna give it back to you
life is too precious life is precious life
goes on and on
never stops never stops no no it
just goes on and on and on and on and on

I've got to change that road
I gotta build me a new road
We can walk that road together
hand in hand yeh hand in hand ah come on people
OW_____ Road road talkin' 'bout a road yeh talkin' 'bout TOBACCO ROAD 'Taklin' about
TOBACCO ROAD dirty and a-filthy dirty and a-filthy dirty and a-filthy TOBACCO ROAD yeh
TOBACCO ROAD people our road yeh TOBACCO ROAD yeh TOBACCO ROAD oh Lord
TOBACCO ROAD road talkin' 'bout a road talkin' 'bout a road talkin' 'bout a road talkin' 'bout my-----
- road talkin' 'bout a road talkin' 'bout a road talkin' 'bout it talkin' 'bout a road.talkin' 'bout a road
TOBACCO ROAD.TOBACCO ROAD TOBACCO ROAD-----TOBACCO ROAD----- can't
stop can't stop can't stop me never stop me talkin' 'bout a road I'm goin' home Lord goin' home now goin'
home goin' home goin' home

<http://www.rapidlyrics.com/song/Eric-Burdon--War-Tobacco-Road-lyrics-129866/>

Marianne Faithfull: The Ballad Of Lucy Jordan

The morning sun touched lightly on the eyes of Lucy Jordan
In a white suburban bedroom in a white suburban town
As she lay there 'neath the covers dreaming of a thousand lovers
Till the world turned to orange and the room went spinning round.

At the age of thirty-seven she realised she'd never
Ride through Paris in a sports car with the warm wind in her hair.
So she let the phone keep ringing and she sat there softly singing
Little nursery rhymes she'd memorised in her daddy's easy chair.

Her husband, he's off to work and the kids are off to school,
And there are, oh, so many ways for her to spend the day.
She could clean the house for hours or rearrange the flowers
Or run naked through the shady street screaming all the way.

At the age of thirty-seven she realised she'd never
Ride through Paris in a sports car with the warm wind in her hair
So she let the phone keep ringing as she sat there softly singing
Pretty nursery rhymes she'd memorised in her daddy's easy chair.

The evening sun touched gently on the eyes of Lucy Jordan
On the roof top where she climbed when all the laughter grew too loud
And she bowed and curtsied to the man who reached and offered her his hand,
And he led her down to the long white car that waited past the crowd.

At the age of thirty-seven she knew she'd found forever
As she rode along through Paris with the warm wind in her hair ...

http://www.lyricsfreak.com/m/marianne+faithfull/the+ballad+of+lucy+jordan_20088581.html