

## **A Day Out**

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He fastened the rope to the bumper and then tied the other end around her neck. It was a sunny day in late autumn, the woods all around them silent. He stared at her delicate neck, the rope now dangling from it. Then he turned around and got into the car. Albert, who had been sitting in the car all along, just looked at him stupidly as he turned the ignition key. 'You're gonna kill her,' said Albert, as he lit a cigarette.

'Rubbish, she's a good runner,' replied Wolfgang. Then he started the car, an old Ford Mustang.

'And what'll we do with her when it's all over?' Albert asked.

'She won't say anything, I know her.'

'And what if she does?'

'Oh, don't be stupid, we're just going for a little drive. She'll like it,' Wolfgang responded.

Albert took a fitful drag on his cigarette. Then Wolfgang turned up the radio and looked back at Silke, who was still standing on the grass with the rope around her neck. He put the car in gear and stepped on the accelerator; the tyres began to move and the rope tautened gradually.

He'd made the decision abruptly while they'd been waiting for Silke yesterday. He hadn't had a good day and he'd suddenly remembered that Silke still owed him twenty euros. If she couldn't pay him back she'd have to work the twenty euros off, he thought. Albert was standing next to him, smoking a cigarette. 'Either she pays or she works,' Wolfgang murmured to himself. 'Look, here comes Silke,' called Albert, blowing out his smoke.

Wolfgang turned his head and saw her skipping across the railway tracks. Silke waved at them. Far behind her, Wolfgang saw the train approaching slowly in the distance, reminding him of his little brother's model railway. He looked across the fields and then back at Silke, who had now crossed the tracks. She was wearing a grey anorak and tight dark blue jeans.

'Hello,' she called out to them.

'Have you got my twenty euros?' Wolfgang asked immediately, not responding to her hello. Silke pulled a face. The aggressive tone of his voice irritated her. 'But I told you you'd get it at the end of the month.'

'That's what you said last time.'

'It's only twenty euros.'

‘So what, it’s my twenty euros!’ Wolfgang got angry. Albert looked at them both in amazement. He didn’t know anything about the twenty euros and he felt left out; Wolfgang usually told him everything. He looked at Silke, who gave him an embarrassed smile.

‘Weren’t we going to take the train into town?’ Silke tried to change the subject and looked back at Wolfgang.

‘Yeah, but I don’t want to any more,’ he answered brusquely, shoving his hands in his pockets. She felt something threatening in Wolfgang’s eyes. She had often borrowed money from him and paid it back every time. So she didn’t understand why he was putting so much pressure on her all of a sudden. The train halted with loud screeches.

‘Are we getting on or not?’ asked Albert. Wolfgang thought for a moment and then walked towards the train. Albert followed him whereas Silke hesitated, only getting on the train when Albert turned around to see where she was.

They walked through two empty carriages and finally sat down on the rear seats of the last one. ‘We’ve got a whole train to ourselves,’ said Albert. Wolfgang didn’t react, only staring at Silke, who was now sitting opposite him. He didn’t take his eyes off her, sometimes veering to her thighs, then looking her straight in the face again.

‘Either you pay now, or you work the twenty euros off,’ she heard his voice, quiet but insistent.

‘What?’

‘You heard me.’ Albert stared at him in confusion. He’d never heard Wolfgang talk like that before.

‘What d’you mean?’ Silke asked, an embarrassed smile on her face.

Wolfgang’s face didn’t move a muscle; his eyes held hers. ‘You’re going to work off the twenty euros.’ The calm in his voice confused Silke completely; she looked around and kept an uneasy eye out for the conductor. But it was once of those fully automatic trains that didn’t have a conductor any more.

‘I see, and how?’ Silke asked. Now Albert felt Silke’s fear. He’d have liked to defend her, but Wolfgang’s determination told him there was no point.

‘The way women usually pay.’ Wolfgang had leapt to his feet and sat down next to Silke.

‘You’ll pay the way women pay,’ he repeated.

‘You’re crazy,’ Silke retorted, wanting to change seats. But Wolfgang pressed a determined hand to her thigh. She’d known Wolfgang since they were at school together, she knew he had a temper and liked fighting other boys, but she’d never have imagined he might treat her this way. She was wedged in between Wolfgang and Albert. Albert had fallen completely

silent, as if the whole thing had nothing to do with him. ‘Why doesn’t he say something?’ thought Silke, looking at him. But he just stared out of the window. Wolfgang turned to her and tried to kiss her. His lips were very close and she felt his breathing, very fast now. ‘Are you mad?’ she hissed at him. But she felt his hands all the more firmly on her thigh, and he slowly pushed his right hand between her legs. She tried to push him away with all her might, a couple of tears running down her cheeks. Suddenly the blade of a knife glinted before her eyes.

‘Have you gone crazy?’ she heard Albert now.

‘You keep out of it!’ was Wolfgang’s gruff reply. ‘You can have a bit of fun as well if you like. She’s got to work off the twenty euros.’ As Wolfgang turned to Albert he held the knife in his right hand in front of Silke’s face. Silke flashed Albert a look of fear. But he simply turned away. ‘Come with me,’ Wolfgang commanded Silke.

‘Where to?’

‘Just come, nothing’s going to happen.’ He pulled her up by the hand and shoved her ahead of him. He opened the toilet door and pushed her onto the seat. She stared at him. He looked at least six foot six to her now, and suddenly he opened his flies and his erect penis stood out. The protruding member made him look ridiculous. ‘What’re you looking at like that?’ he asked.

‘Your dick’s really big.’ Wolfgang looked at his penis, then back at Silke, still sitting on the toilet. Their eyes met for a moment.

‘All right, but then you have to leave me alone, and put the knife away,’ she said to him after a while. When he felt her lips he put the knife back in his pocket and gazed at the ceiling, where the light flickered.

After a while they went back to the carriage. Albert didn’t react straight away, looking at them with a bored expression. Wolfgang seemed relaxed again now, like he usually did actually, and the tension between Wolfgang and Silke seemed to have relaxed as well; or at least it looked that way to Albert when they sat back down on their seats. None of them said anything. Suddenly though, Silke kissed Wolfgang and tried to nuzzle up close to him. Wolfgang felt Silke’s whole body trembling. ‘Hey, what’s all this about – nobody told you you could come crawling up to me,’ he pushed her away. She fell back onto her seat and started crying. Albert looked at her with pity. Seeing Silke like this made him really angry with Wolfgang; he’d have liked to hammer both his fists in his face. But he only looked at Wolfgang with no visible emotion and then over at Silke. Silke was very upset, kept breaking

out in tears. ‘Can’t you pull yourself together?’ Wolfgang growled at her. Silke wiped the tears out of her face. The way Wolfgang was talking to her was much more painful than what had happened before in the toilet.

Wolfgang gazed out of the window absent-mindedly for a while and then cast his eyes on Silke. ‘You should be glad. You know, there’s nobody actually here.’ Silke stared at him. His nose was slightly bent; she’d never noticed it before. The next station was their stop. Silke wanted to get up but Wolfgang pressed her roughly back into her seat. ‘We’re not getting off yet,’ he ordered.

Albert threw him a questioning look. ‘What?’

‘We’re going further, we’re going to Salzburg.’

‘What are we going to do in Salzburg?’ Albert asked.

‘I haven’t been to Salzburg for ages, it’s a nice place,’ replied Wolfgang.

‘I’m getting off though,’ Silke said with conviction, getting up again.

‘You’re coming with us. You still owe me exactly sixteen euros. You’ve worked off four,’ Wolfgang explained in a dry voice. Silke tore herself away, but Wolfgang grabbed her hand and pulled her back. He kissed her, then he pushed her between his body and Albert’s slight torso. ‘Maybe you should kiss her as well. Try it!’ he ordered his friend. But he just stared at him. The train pulled off again. Outside they saw buildings moving by like big dark ghosts. ‘Give Albert a kiss,’ he laughed. ‘That’d be, let’s say, fifty cents.’

Albert kept looking out of the window, as if he hadn’t heard Wolfgang. ‘Didn’t you understand me, I told you to kiss him,’ he ordered in a completely changed tone of voice. Silke turned to Albert and kissed him on the cheek. ‘No, do it properly. With tongues and all that.’ Albert looked at Silke. He’d never been kissed by a woman. He felt her saliva on his cheek. Now he felt her lips on his and then he felt her tongue trying to get into his mouth; in the background he saw Wolfgang’s broad grin. And then he felt her hands on his shoulders and he somehow had the feeling she was asking him for help. But then Wolfgang dragged her away again. ‘That’s enough. You like that, don’t you, you slapper?’ Silke looked at him with hate-filled eyes and spat in his face. The spit ran down his forehead, then slowly down to his cheek. He wiped it on his jacket with a movement of his arm, wordlessly. She expected a reaction but nothing came; he just sat there looking at her. He somehow reminded her of her father, who’d sometimes used to hit her too when she was younger; it was very unusual now. They sat in silence. The train stopped but nobody got on. Albert could still feel Silke’s lips on his mouth; she was sitting quietly and introvertedly between the two of them. Wolfgang stared straight ahead with a determined look. Suddenly Silke jumped up and tried to run away. As

quick as a flash, Wolfgang grabbed her arms and pulled her back. 'We're not finished yet,' he threatened. He was breathing quickly. He pressed her to the seat and ran a hand over her cheeks. Then he pulled her sweater up with a swift movement and stroked her stomach. Silke jumped up again, this time managing to tear herself free. She ran towards the door of the carriage, but before she could open it Wolfgang had caught up with her. She began hitting out at him. But Wolfgang grabbed her around the belly with his powerful arms and carried her back. 'Can't you keep a bit of an eye out?' he yelled at Albert.

'Yeah, all right,' said Albert and pressed his hand against Silke's thigh as well. He thought he could feel her skin underneath the material.

Wolfgang took the knife back out of his pocket and held it up to Silke's nose. 'If you do that again I'll carve up your face.'

Silke felt her heart beating, fast and hard. 'What do you want, shall we go to the toilet again?' she hissed at him.

'D'you hear that? Maybe you should go with her,' laughed Wolfgang, taking no notice of Silke. Albert looked at the knife that Wolfgang was still clutching, waving it around in front of Silke's face. He really did fancy going to the toilet with Silke now. If she could do it with Wolfgang she could just as well do it with him too. Maybe she really did like it. Wolfgang began nibbling at Silke's earlobe. She pulled away with a jerk. 'Don't you like that?' She felt her heartbeat again and suddenly she was screaming hysterically, her fists punching away at Wolfgang. Wolfgang caught her by her long hair, tore her to the floor and pressed his foot against her head so that she couldn't move.

'Have you lost it or what?' Albert snapped at him as he stared at Silke, her face strangely distorted under Wolfgang's shoe. 'Leave her alone!'

'Look what she's done.' Albert looked up at Wolfgang, who was feeling his bleeding nose with one hand. Wolfgang gave Silke a sharp tug at the hair, dragging her upright. 'Right, we're back to twenty euros again now,' he said when she was sitting next to him again. 'You do understand, right?' Silke nodded. 'That's all right then.' They sat still in their seats.

Wolfgang wiped the blood off his face with a tissue that he'd spat on liberally. Silke watched him. Albert looked out of the window, where he saw lonely streetlamps passing by as the train pulled into the next town's station. All of a sudden Wolfgang grabbed Silke roughly by the arm and pulled her up. 'We're getting off,' he ordered and shoved her ahead of him. Albert looked at Wolfgang with surprise and then followed them. It was late in the evening and the half moon hung proudly over the station. There was nobody to be seen far and wide. The train moved off without them. 'Now what?' asked Albert.

‘Don’t know, let’s see. And don’t you dare get any stupid ideas,’ Wolfgang said to Silke, who was standing fearfully next to him.

They went into the station building. The ticket counter and the tobacconist’s were closed. Outside, the occasional figure darted by. Wolfgang looked around. He shoved Silke ahead of him towards the toilets. Albert followed them with slow steps. Outside the WC, they sat down on an old wooden bench decorated with graffiti. ‘And what are we doing here?’ asked Albert, who was cold now.

‘Silke’s going to work off her debts,’ replied Wolfgang in a bored tone of voice.

‘What d’you mean?’

‘Silke’s going to work, isn’t she?’ Wolfgang pressed his body against Silke, putting one arm around her. ‘Silke’s going to do what she really likes doing.’ At that moment an older man with a beer-belly lurched towards them. Taking no notice of them, he opened the door to the toilets. Wolfgang nodded a sign to Albert and whispered something in his ear. Albert looked at him in surprise, then glanced briefly at Silke, who was sitting still next to him, got up and followed the man. He came back a few minutes later, nodding at his friend. Then Wolfgang pulled Silke up and dragged her into the men’s toilet. Albert sat back down on the bench. He looked around nervously.

Silke stared at the white tiled floor. She heard the urinal flushing and when she looked up the man was standing in front of her. He must have been over fifty, looking at her earnestly.

‘You’re gonna give him a blow job. Then you can go. Then we’re quit,’ Wolfgang whispered to Silke, still holding her tightly.

‘So this is her,’ said the man, having looked her up and down. Wolfgang gestured at a toilet door, which the stranger opened, then he shoved Silke in there.

‘Ten minutes, understand?’ Wolfgang called after them. The door was locked from inside.

Silke felt the man’s breath; it stank of beer. Behind her was the toilet bowl; they barely had room to stand up. The man immediately tried to kiss her. She felt his hands on her breasts. His saliva dripped onto her neck. Then he unbuttoned his trousers and let them drop. She stared at his penis, which hung limp below his round belly. Now he took it in his right hand. He tried to kiss Silke again, then pressed her head down to it. She was overcome with disgust and when he noticed her resistance he pushed his body up against hers. His hand rubbed roughly at his penis. She felt his breath, faster and faster now. As he came he pressed her hard against him, his ejaculate splashing onto her jeans. After a moment of not moving he pulled up his trousers, not looking at her again, opened the door and left. Silke locked the door again and

sat down on the toilet bowl. She heard Wolfgang's aggressive voice saying to the man that five euros wasn't enough, he'd gone over the time and it would cost ten now. Just after that there was a knock at her door. 'You can come out,' Wolfgang commanded. She didn't move. 'Can you hear me, come out.' A few instants later she saw Wolfgang's hands reaching out for her from above from the next cubicle, and then his face. 'Are you deaf of what, or do I have to climb over?' Silke rose hesitantly and unlocked the door. 'So, did you have fun?' he laughed. 'Here, have a chewing gum, for disinfection.' They left the toilets.

Albert was waiting outside. 'Was there a problem?' Wolfgang asked him. Albert just shook his head and got up from the bench, ignoring Silke. Silke gave Albert a sullen glare.

'There's a couple of fruit machines on the other side, not far from here. Let's go and have a play – what d'you think?' Wolfgang suggested now in an almost jovial tone. Albert didn't reply, simply following after Wolfgang.

'Yeah, OK,' said Silke suddenly, confusing Albert entirely. In the amusement arcade, Wolfgang and Silke sat down at a pinball machine while Albert ordered a beer, standing lost and lonely at the counter. As he drank his beer he watched Silke standing concentrated at the machine, as if nothing had happened. Then Wolfgang played. He punched the machine in rage when his last ball went down. They left the arcade after an hour and walked back to the station. Silke said she bet she'd beat Wolfgang next time around. 'No chance,' Albert heard Wolfgang say as he strolled along behind the two of them.

Just before they reached the station, Silke paused and her expression changed. 'I think I'll stay here for a bit.'

'What? The last train's in ten minutes,' Wolfgang told her. In the end she followed them. She looked around suspiciously, as if she'd sensed danger somewhere nearby. 'We had a pretty good night, actually, didn't we?' Wolfgang commented on the train. Silke said nothing, staring out of the window. The doors closed automatically and the train began to move off slowly. They sat silently on the journey, each sunk in their own thoughts on their seats. Then when the train pulled into their station and they could make out the building, all three of them got up. It was clear to Silke that she could go home now, so she was all the more surprised to feel Wolfgang's strong hand around her wrist. 'You still owe me ten euros,' he said.

'We're quit,' replied Silke, annoyed.

'No we're not.' Albert saw the train departing and couldn't understand what they were arguing about for the noise. Once the train had disappeared there was a sudden silence. The stars shone out above them. 'My mother's on a company outing this weekend, the house is empty. You can both come back with me,' announced Wolfgang.

‘But I don’t want to,’ replied Silke.

‘Rubbish, you’re coming.’ Wolfgang grabbed at her long hair, dragging her after him. Albert just followed them, perhaps because he didn’t want to leave Silke alone with Wolfgang. Not much later they were at Wolfgang’s mother’s house, slightly outside of the village by a river. Wolfgang immediately put a bottle of whisky on the table, fetching three glasses and pouring out three measures. ‘For the mood,’ he said to Silke. Then he took a glass and raised it to the others. ‘Can you put some music on?’ he ordered Albert, who was standing next to the stereo. He sat down next to Silke and kissed her. He stroked her breasts and asked if she liked it. She looked apathetically over at Albert, who was sorting through the CDs. Despite all that had happened, she felt attracted to Wolfgang and she wanted everything to be the way it had been before that evening. She emptied her glass in one and slammed it onto the table. She poured herself another.

In silence, she watched Albert. ‘What d’you think, why don’t we tie Albert up? He might like it,’ she whispered into Wolfgang’s ear. Wolfgang looked at Albert as he rummaged unsuspectingly through the CDs, then back at Silke; he nodded. They sneaked up on Albert from behind. Suddenly he felt Wolfgang’s hands on his shoulders and Silke’s hands on his legs.

‘Hey, what are you doing?’ shouted Albert, dropping the CD he’d been looking for and finally found. A little later he was lying on the ground, his hands and legs tied, and Silke was standing wide-legged over him while Wolfgang was back on the couch, looking over at them. Albert looked at the glass in Silke’s hand. ‘Want some too?’ she asked him. But before he could reply she had leant down to him and poured the whisky into his mouth. Silke could hardly stand up straight by now but she liked the fact that Albert was lying beneath her. She unbuttoned his trousers and his erect penis reared up. ‘Look, you’re turning him on,’ he heard Wolfgang laughing. Silke dropped onto her back on the floor next to Albert and eyed his penis from this angle until it suddenly went limp. Disappointed as if some natural spectacle had come to an end, she turned her head aside. Then she struggled to her feet again, lurched over to Wolfgang and poured herself more of the whisky.

‘Untie me,’ stammered Albert. He tried to pull his trousers back up with a series of strange contortions, but it didn’t work.

‘All right, all right,’ said Wolfgang, getting up and beginning to loosen the ropes slowly. ‘That was really funny,’ Albert complained. He looked over at Silke squatting drunk in a corner of the room as he did up his trousers.



Silke's head was pounding when she woke up the next day. Her memory only came back gradually. When she wanted to move her hands she noticed she was tied up, and the rope was looped around a large old chest. Albert was asleep on the couch. She saw a little black cat lying in the sun outside on the veranda. She tried to free herself but soon realised it was hopeless. A little later Wolfgang appeared in the room, stretching sleepily and looking at Silke. 'Can you untie me?' she asked in a weak voice. But he ignored her and went out on the veranda, taking the cat on his lap and stroking it lovingly. But now Albert stirred too. They looked at each other in silence. Albert averted his eyes and slipped his feet into his shoes, which were by the couch. He got up, opened the glass door and went out to join Wolfgang. Silke saw them talking outside the window. Actually it was only Albert doing the talking, while Wolfgang sat quietly next to him. A little later, Wolfgang left the veranda, leaving Albert alone. Then Wolfgang was standing in front of her again, jangling the car keys in his hand and telling her they were going for a little drive. He unlooped the rope from the chest but left her hands tied. Silke didn't reply, looking around anxiously as he led her into the garage where the Ford was. He opened the car's rear door, Albert already waiting in the passenger seat, and pushed her inside.

Silke jogged slowly behind the car. 'Look, she's doing fine. Then we can put our foot down a bit more.' Wolfgang pressed the accelerator and Silke began to run. Albert watched her through the rear window.

'Watch out, she can't keep it up much longer,' he shouted. Wolfgang cut the speed and looked in the rear-view mirror. Then he turned the car. Its wheels rolled a little into the bog, spinning for a moment before they found firm ground. They drove back at slow speed, Silke jogging behind them.

'We need petrol,' Wolfgang commented.

'Have you even got a licence?' asked Albert.

'It's not far, nothing's going to happen,' Wolfgang replied. He stopped the car, released the rope from the bumper and walked up to Silke, who was out of breath. She shrank back a few steps, and Wolfgang pulled her towards him by the rope until she was right in front of him.

'Your exercise programme's over. You can get in the car now.' When Silke didn't reply and gave no sign of getting in the car, he pulled her by the rope to the Ford and forced her inside. A little later they were racing along the track between the fields. Silke was shaken to and fro. They veered briefly into wet grass, but Wolfgang managed to get the car back under control with a reflex-like movement. Albert looked at Wolfgang in shock. 'What's up, are you

scared?’ he heard him laughing. Then Wolfgang changed gear and picked up speed. There was a huge cloud of dust behind them. Wolfgang laughed like crazy and turned up the radio. The maize fields flashed by. They soon reached the main road. Albert watched Silke in the rear-view mirror as she sat quietly and looked out of the window. There was a tractor with a trailer of hay ahead of them. Wolfgang swore and braked, unable to overtake. At the first opportunity he swerved to one side, going down from third to second gear and putting his foot right down. He noticed the police car parked at the edge of the road too late. In the next instant he saw the police stop sign. He turned the music down, turning around to Silke and untying her ropes with one hand. ‘Don’t you dare say anything.’ He stopped about fifty yards after the police car. A young policewoman, followed by an older, robust-looking officer, came towards them. Wolfgang stayed sitting quietly, turning around to Silke again and throwing her a strict glance. Then he rolled down the window.

‘Hello sir, can we see your papers please – registration documents and driving licence,’ he heard the policewoman say. Wolfgang rummaged in the glove compartment where the first-aid kit was and then handed her the registration document. She passed it to the other officer, who inspected it closely. The policewoman glanced at Albert and Silke. Silke looked back at her in silence. ‘And your licence?’ she turned back to Wolfgang.

‘It’s at home, I just wanted to pop to the petrol station.’

‘That’s not good, I’m afraid.’

‘I can bring it by later if you want. It’s really just at home.’

She examined Wolfgang with distrust. ‘Where do you live?’

‘Just in the village back there,’ Wolfgang waved his arm. At that moment, the policeman gave her the registration papers and went back to his car. Wolfgang handed them to Albert, who put them back in the glove compartment. Suddenly Silke shoved her head forwards and retched, as if she were going to vomit.

‘I feel sick,’ she stammered.

The policewoman looked at her in amazement. ‘Maybe you need some fresh air.’

‘Oh, she’ll be fine in a minute,’ said Wolfgang. But Silke leant forward again and this time it seemed as if she really would vomit at any moment.

‘I need fresh air,’ she stammered again. Wolfgang stayed in his seat, but when he noticed the policewoman’s eyes on him he got out and opened the rear door. The officer didn’t let him out of her sight. Silke clambered out of the car, lurched a few steps and then clutched trembling at the surprised policewoman as she vomited.

Wolfgang stared at her in horror and got into the car. 'I'll go and get my driver's licence then,' he murmured. He started the car and drove off, not looking back again. Albert stared at Wolfgang, stunned. 'What're you looking like that for, everything's OK.' Wolfgang turned the radio up again and put his foot down as the neighbouring village's church tower disappeared behind them.