

This beta version of my book may contain errors.

***I AM -
THE CHILDHOOD YOU DIDN'T HAVE***

by **IVAR**

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1. The red dress in the Ubito Forest

She walks in the woods of eucalyptus trees. Behind her rises the Ubito mountain range. She is wearing red shoes, a bright dress and a smart bonnet that she has tied together a little. Because it's windy. And she is holding somewhat in her hand that looks like - a large cheese slicer. Some red macaw birds whistle curiously after her, with their heads tilted. They are not afraid of her.

She stops and looks back. Maybe she forgot something? Or is she afraid of something?
- Now she's moving on. But slower than before. Further ahead, two persons suddenly stand. One thick and one thin. She stops again. But calmly goes on. Tilts the head slightly. Whistles like the macaw birds. And the strange thing is, that now I think her dress is more red than bright.

I go behind a tree. The two men, as it is, go to meet her. The thick one holds something oblong inside a sack. The other, tall and thin, wears a dirty cap - with the mark of the Forest Department. She stops whistling and walking. The macaws land quietly, in the trees around them. They sit like red lanterns between the branches. The thin man holds back the fat man. Now they are there! My heart is pounding in my throat.

She slowly drop her curtsy, says in a clear voice:
"Good afternoon gentlemen, and the right to the way."

- It's her! snarls the fat one.

- Are you sure? says the thin one nervously. The fat one barks annoyed:

"I do it!"

She takes a small step forward and whistles far into the woods. Her dress is now fiery red. Also the trees, and the road to both sides - is soon like a sea of fire from the many macaws. The fat one sweats and grunts:

"She hasn't shown us her badge!"

The thin one shouts shrilly:

- They don't always, dammit! Let's think! - They step back. But now the birds are very close about them; you can hardly see her. With a:

"I thank both you and the forest's road decrees!" she bobs past them.

- Who were they? - I say out of breath when I reach Pollyanna. My hand is wet with sweat. She takes it and smiles at me:

- Don't bother your little head with that. - I will continue:

- What did they want?

She takes a few dance steps, but stops and looks at me seriously:

- When we get home, you have to let me talk to Yoko alone!

- Only if you teach me that whistle! - I say. Squeeze her hand.

She leans down and whispers:

"It's probably too difficult for you, little Eutille! It's the silver flute.

A kind of flutter whistle, said father."

Why not that whistle? I think. Not mad, just curious. My older sister teaches me many other things. She can make long roads short, with her funny tricks and arts. Like how a certain green herb turns blue if you roll it between your hands. Or how to shave off hair with the beak of a macaw. Suddenly the woods thins out. More and more cherry trees; we are home!

"Yoko!" - I shout.

"Yoko! where are you?"

2. The Santu house

What do you look like though? - it comes from Pollyanna. And there Yoko stands wet and dirty in her light grey trousers, sky blue shirt, necklace and even her nice blue dancing shoes.

"What happened?" we say.

- Sorry! it comes from Yoko. - But I couldn't get back up.

- Sorry what? - says Pollyanna.

Yoko hopelessly brushes mud off her clothes:

- The first wish...

Pollyanna grabs Yoko:

- Oh no! You don't mean that! How? Yoko throws out her arms:

- It worked, Polly. And Yoko with wide eyes:

- I dropped my best spade into the big well. I got it - but then I couldn't get back up.

"But Yoko!" Pollyanna shouts. Her dress is almost bright again.

"Excuse me!" Yoko shouts, and they give each other a dirty hug.

- Then we only have two wishes left, whispers Pollyanna, and Yoko nods. And I nod along, even though I have no idea what they're talking about. They suddenly let go of each other and look at me. And I say:

- I promise, promise, promise never to look down the big well!

Yoko laughs and points to Pollyanna:

"That was the nice dress I made for you yesterday!" - Pollyanna smiles widely and carefully wipes off her leiya:

- at the very back, Eutille, the nicest gobos and sugar beans. All three of us are probably hungry. And take three glasses from the small barrel. It is mixed. - Then they're done with me, I think sadly. But sooner or later I find out what they are up to.

I pass by my secret cave. Someone has been there. I look in: - under the ceiling hang two of the big transformation balls that change color when you lick them. Then Director Elno Trenson from Blue Hall has stopped by. I get gobos and beans. Also picking some golden ribbon lilies for the table. And there, up on the gable, is Yoko's best spade - clean and neat!

When I get back into the kitchen, I can hear Yoko and Pollyanna through the wall. They talk quietly about the woods:

"I trip over them. You can't see where they are." - says Yoko.

After a pause, says Pollyanna:

- You know that nobody will believe that.

- But then, - Yoko tries: it's the hares of our grove in illegal traps, Polly. There were two in a trap. One hare was wounded in the head, the other lay still with closed eyes. I didn't take them, but kicked the trap and set them free. Pollyanna raises her voice:

- I don't like the two lights last week. There are no paths that way. But they don't know which of us is Yoko. Otherwise...when they find out...

- But Pollyanna, they dare not come here! - Pollyanna yawns:

- Yes, you're probably safe here - and in the big well! and they both laugh a little.

There is silence, then I hear Yoko:

- I have to bear what I have to bear, Polly! But if they offend or harm you or Eutille? I change my name to Medusa, chase the angels out of my house and start a whist club.

- God forbid Yoko! It must not happen! Without you I mean Dimas?

- You don't understand, Polly! I don't want it. It comes from within and wants out. If something happens to one of you, I can no longer ... control it. It will all seek back where it came from.

The house looks small from the outside, but is big inside. Just like me. At least I'm the youngest. Pollyanna looks so young but is the oldest. And Yoko, she's smart, in a very - Yoko-ish way. She makes the house a home. Our home.

"Yoko, help me with the wok!"

- Eutille, I'm coming! - Yoko and Pollyanna clap their hands:

- Bravo, you are skilled, everything turns the right way. - And they do, and I am careful to separate the clean from the dirty.

While we are eating, the wind has picked up. And suddenly: the long muffled grunt. Like distant thunder. This is Nawaaf, our wild boar. It is also our signal about strangers.

Pollyanna and Yoko nod to each other:

"Hide! Eutille!" - Yoko holds one hand under her apron. Pollyanna looks out the window.

Slides to the door:

- Shall we play with the crocodiles? She looks with the door ajar:

- I can see - a black horse with a gig.

- And now I see - Mr Rinni. It's your table Yoko. Yoko opens the door and let her curtsy a few times while smiling. Says something like:

- How nice to see you again Mr Rinni! You do keep your horse looking good!

The man puts his hands together, smiles and bows deeply:

- I can come back tomorrow, it's late.

- No, you are not disturbing, Mr Rinni:

- that was this rather simple chair, you understand. I'm ashamed to bring it up. It is broken here.

- A beautiful old chair, Sir, let's take it over in my workshop!

Pollyanna and I clean up and tidy up the kitchen. Then we sit quietly and hold each other:

"Little Tille, what do you think? You look a bit worn out. Was it a hard day?"

- No, Pollyanna, thank you for taking me there! But I was very afraid in the wood; you must not tell her. Very scared. Then I won't be allowed next time. Pollyanna rocks us a little from side to side as she makes little clicks with her tongue:

- I'm going on to Setorium tomorrow. And you can't get involved in that, Eutille. But you can help Yoko and you can read the books. - Pollyanna and I yawn and listen to Yoko and Rinni down in the workshop. Yoko laughs and says:

"It's what we call: a 'honey chair'. The wood is very soft and difficult to glue and pin together nicely. But I use some tricks my father taught me." Rinni perks up:

- Mr Lipatel was a wizard I must say. Made a writing chatol for my blessed wife. Teak and camphor wood. Excuse me many times if I remember wrongly! Sorry!

- I remember that well, because I was part of that piece, says Yoko: - edged with rosewood veneer, and with inlaid roses in maple. Was your wife happy about it, Sir?

- The chatol was her best friend. She called it Rosa. - But your father taught you some tricks, Miss Yoko?

- Yes! Your chair needs a real bench ride! I turn a new leg and cut some dovetails. Old to new wood. It will not be able to be seen. And you can believe that it lasts!

- Mr Rinni is on his way out backwards:

- Dear Ms, You do my chair far too much honour, far too much honour. I can't take it.

When can it be finished without pressuring you, Miss Yoko?

Finally, we can all rest in peace. I sleep behind the workshop, Yoko and Pollyanna sleep in the small room. But I can't sleep. And when I can, I mostly dream about my mother.

No, my father. No, mostly about both of them. Yoko sometimes says:

"You always have your father and mother in your heart. You must not dream backwards but forwards. You must dream about your future and believe that you will get it. But you must first dream it yourself, then you must think it, and then may you build it. It was the same for father and mother." But now that I CAN'T sleep, I can't dream either. And then I get no future either. And then I can't sleep at all. - I take my neck pillow and slip in to the big ones. Pollyanna is fast asleep. I apologize and Yoko makes room for me and holds me. It's our whispering time:

"Are you sad? You can be here, but there isn't much space." I give her a thank you hug.

- Do you remember when you were little, Tille? Slept in the red bed with the blue elephant?

- Do you know where it is? - If I was afraid ... in the dark. Did I cry any words mother taught me. Then one of you finally came and comforted me. And if one of you kissed in my hands, I knew it was father.

- It's funny you say that. Yes, that's how dad was.

- Yoko, what kind of wishes were you talking about? And which works? - long break.

Then Yoko whispers:

- You have to know sooner or later. So you get it now Eutille.

- You remember when mom got sick, you know?

- She was lying in the living room. Dad cried!

- Yes, it was very bad Eutille. She had puerperal fever. On the last day of mother's life, we sat with her. Mother said:

"Listen now! Follow Father and help each other! I don't have much. But I do have something to give you. Something that all people use or don't use. A wish-for-life. I've also been given a wish - my wish. And father knows what I asked for. I grant each of you a wish. Pollyanna, and Yoko, and you little Eutille."

- Mother took the small cross that she always wore around her neck:

"It is a resurrection cross because Jesus is not there." She gave it to Pollyanna:

- You three girls can wear it in turn:

"It is Grace and Love through Faith. It will remind you of my words. Save them, and save your desire for the day of despair, when you think that everything ..." Mother said nothing more. It was over. - Yoko wipes her eyes:

- And we have done that too. So wore it in shifts. And I think you'll soon be big enough to do that too.

- Do what, Yoko?

- Wear the gold cross! Taking turns with Polly and me, Eutille, Yoko says, yawning. Then we lie quietly together for a while. And then I'm the only one awake. Or am I? The hatch behind the workshop clatters and I know that Nawaaf is now heading out into the night, in search of forest truffles and sweet potatoes. And to dig a hole and provide. And to wash in the lake. And now Pollyanna has been awakened. - And I pretend to sleep.

Pollyanna lies down for a bit and moves around. Then she takes the mirror on the wall, looks at the moon in the small window, and looks at herself in the mirror and says quietly:

"Don't let me down!" And a slightly brighter little voice from the mirror answers:

- I was scared - just like Eutille was. Couldn't see you! - And Pollyanna's ordinary voice replies:

"At night you can do what you want - but during the day I decide." The mirror whines:

- I just wanted to go back a bit and pick two sweet round...

"No! Wait for the sweet. You must always do everything I say first! You can! It's important! Otherwise you'll bring us both into danger. Remember that Lipatel means..." - in the same moment the moon disappears and it gets completely dark.

3. Bartos, Pirallo and Dimas

I'm alone with Yoko today. Mr Soma King has already fetched Pollyanna with his cart. She is going to Setorium, after all. Yoko and I alternate between working in the workshop and doing tinicha exercises outside. It's nice and quiet. I embrace Yoko saying:

"I love you!" - And she says:

- I love you too little Tille gal! - Then we stand for a while and look out over the valley and the forest.

- Yoko, why do we have the square green pole next to the road?

- Come and see! - Here are two brands. The top one is the red Santu mark, which tells us that the house and the grounds behind us have been sacred ground since ancient times. - The bottom tag is a yellow Bartos tag. Because after father's death we have no men in the family. Then we three girls can't own money or anything else, and we can't get married. That is why we are placed under the protection of Master Puno Fiala Bartos. It's called a guardianship. He is our guardian, our protector. Under that guardianship we can make money and spend money and get married. - That is, as long as he wants.

"Does he want it Yoko?" - I say startled.

- Yes, because he has taken over the house, and takes shares of everything we earn. He has to pay a dowry if we get married. But receive countermeasures or other benefits in return for us. If he refuses us anything, we can probably get a new guardian to buy out Fiala Bartos. With house and land, and with us three girls, Yoko says and pokes me in the stomach:

- The more money we earn ourselves, the easier we can get everything the way the three of us want it.

- Yoko, you tickle me just like mom did.

- How Eutille?

- One of the good night songs she sang to me was:

Silently my canoe glides high above the wild baobab trees.

Boldly my wish tones fall down into the sleeping volcano.

Far away a great miracle calls a little prayer.

"Little Tille, you are that prayer", said mother then, and poked me in the stomach.

- I didn't think about that at all, says Yoko. She also sang songs to Polly and me when we were little! I especially remember the one about the little disciple:

The little disciple wrote something on a tiny hulled grain.

I can't see it. You can't see it. We can't see it.

The little disciple wrote something on the great firmament.

I can't see it. You can't see it. We can't see it.

The little disciple lives in a place inside us.

I can't see it. You can't see it. We can't see it.

Yoko and I poke each other in the stomach and laugh, "I can't see it. You can't see it. We can't see it." while we go down to the forest meadow which stretches for three km to the south of our house. We walk through an area with beautiful birds and plants. And we throw delicate little floating seeds into the air and shout: Look! and points out the best ones. Two of them hover together for a long time and rise high above us. Yoko claps, but I suddenly feel a wistful abandonment:

"Yoko, how do you know that Dimas is the right man for you?" Yoko lowers her arms and follows the two seeds:

- I don't know, Eutille. Maybe that's why we have love.

- Are you in doubt?

- It's a difficult decision, Eutille. Perhaps the most important in one's life.

- Do you ever have doubts?

- Yes, definitely. But not about my love.

- I like him a lot too, but what if you were wrong, Yoko?

- Maybe then I will disappear together with the love. I don't know, Tille.

- What don't you know?

- If love can vanish. So, go to, if you understand. Why do you ask?

- Because I love you both. Therefore. And I was hoping you could give me something to hold on to. When in doubt. About you, yes, and about myself. I'm afraid I can't love anyone the way you do. - Yoko takes my hands:

- Eutille, I'm not as strong as you think. And my way is not your way. My love is not yours. When you meet your own love, you will not have the slightest doubt that it is real. And that it is yours. But you will discover that true love is not within us but between us. Otherwise you end up with only two friends. However, two faithful friends: loneliness and emptiness.

- Can't you give me a sign I can use?

- You mean a kind of life wish?

- A help to know if a man is the right one?

- I don't know, Tille. After all, it is only yourself, even all of you, who together can answer this sort of thing. If that's what you think, you're right. But you're a Lipatel, and they tend to hit the spot.

In ancient times, people measured their thoughts. Made them come true. They called it a courtship.

- One, what does that mean?

- Court-ship! A proposal. An offer to marry. Yea, or a measure to measure suitors with, Tille! Women used the Carican test. A method which is fearful faith in fate. She leans forward with wide eyes: Fatalism! Eutille.

Yoko smiles and smooths my hair into place. My grandmother ... , she says, looking around among some bushes: I often have ... here! Now you just have to see...

- Now I'm not in at all! Yoko, what are you looking for? We sit on an old stump. Yoko has picked a large flower without a stem:

- Now look here, Eutille! It is a girl's "Carican". In the middle, the fruit plant of the flower with the round fruit node. We call that the head. It is the girl's head, her jealousy. - Yoko rips off the head and throws it away:

- Below that we see the four big beautiful petals. White, with a pattern in red with black spots. We call that the Four Handsome False Suitors. - She spreads them out so to admire them all:

- And beneath the false suitors lie the unfurled green sepals. With a faint black pattern, large or small. A pattern of black spots. If the girl can decipher the spots, she has the

name of the real suitor. The faithful lover!

- But Yoko, where do all the suitors come from?

- The girl does not find her suitors. They even find the girl, Eutille.

"Now listen carefully, Tillemom! The girl hides her Carican, and it attracts one suitor after another. But be careful, my girl!

Say no to the first suitor because he doesn't love you!

Say no to the other suitor because he loves someone else!

Say no to the third suitor because he loves himself!

Say no to the fourth suitor because he loves everyone!

As Yoko narrates, she tears off a petal after each sentence. And now we are left with the sepals. I see what looks like five spots but say nothing. And something has fallen into place inside me.

We walk hand in hand further down into the forest meadow, and take it in turns to give each other a small handshake. Maybe it's not all that difficult, I think. - The sun isn't even that bright. A nice creature has drawn a sun veil over the meadow.

"There are a lot of deer today," I say. Yoko nods:

- There is a lot to eat now. These are sikas. Many animals in the forest have been introduced by Master Fiala Bartos.

"He likes animals?"

- Yes ... you can say that. Yoko smiles her "all-sold-out-smile" but suddenly points:

- look further inside there is a white wapiti! A much larger albino deer. Bartos has promised us not to sell hunting on it. It's our deer! It is absolutely wild in the forest. But know us because we took it home as a calf when its mother died.

Yoko has to go back for saddle clothes that fit, and a ratchet. Then we advance towards the deer and stand still - Here, Eutille! Swing the ratchet 9 times vigorously! she hands me the ratchet.

- You are big enough now to try a "forest blow". Being a woman should be fun.

"Is it dangerous?" I ask a little stupidly.

- Yes, says Yoko: life is dangerous. That's why I'm helping you, and that's why you do exactly as I say. And your head, Eutille!

- Yes!

- The horizontal branches!

- I know, Yoko! - I say a little uncertainly, and swing the ratchet as hard as I can - the sikas raise their heads and run away. But the big white one calmly walks out of the edge of the wood and towards us. I pick some juicy greens. - How big! What muscles! As it eats it, Yoko puts the saddle on him, and carefully tightens everything. And after a little more of the green, she lifts me onto - Pirallo.

"Put your feet in the stirrups. And poke a little with your heels when you want to go forward. There are no bits, halters or reins. Hold on to the antlers here and there so you can turn the way you want. Never let go during the ride, keep your balance with your feet as much as you can! Pull back when you want to brake." Yoko teaches me the art of deer riding! And there is nothing horse-like about a large deer. It is like a stork to a swan.

- Try to walk a bit in figure eights! says Yoko, patting Pirallo. But I can't pat him, no. I push and poke a little - Pirallo takes a leap forward, and I smoke back and forth towards the antler when it stops. Whisperer: Thanks for not forking me, Pirallo! Some sounds come from him, like sawing into a coconut. Then we walk around a bit while I steer with his head. - He knows the forest and usually goes back with us himself, - comforts Yoko. Good, I think. It must break or wear. I put my heels in a little, and Pirallo breaks into an elegant trot. Unlike horses, I can't feel much when he sets off. I get to turn Pirallo left and right, and suddenly Yoko is very small and very waving. Inside the wood, the light changes to a mosaic of colored spots and he breaks into a gallop. Jumping over a spring. It feels safe. My shoulders have come down and the pace has picked up. Very up! Trees, bushes blow backwards and long glides bring us over high and low. My hair stands like a flag behind. And I shout wildly, yes cheer!

Suddenly I see on the right one of the forest service's people. He laughs and throws his cap high - and then he's just gone. We turn beyond some fields with fences and ditches. Somewhat frighteningly, the animal below me speeds up even more. We more soar than run over it all. Cross paths and roads, but then agree on the Santu road, to the house where we live. We overtake a couple of riders at full gallop as if they were standing still. It's a road I've always considered too long. But today it seems like a dream blowing by. I slow down - and suddenly we are close to a Yoko with wide eyes. I jump down as best I can and feed my new friend. Until Yoko has gotten all the saddlery off him with a: "How clever you are!" Pirallo squeals and calmly steps away with his head held high.

I look for the two riders. It is only now that I recognize them. They come up to us quietly. So I better tell who they are. - It is Dimas and Mrs Annabella King. Dimas and Yoko went to school together. He has taught us to ride. And once a week the three of them ride in the forest. Yoko rides Benjamin, who is slim and fast. Sometimes Annabella's husband Soma King rides along. And sometimes little me also gets to ride along on one of the small ones. I like the white dun Tuno the best.

Down in the Ubito valley, Dimas is known as Mr Dimas Porter from the mounted police. But to me he has always been a kind of play uncle with blond hair and blue eyes. Sometimes we played hide and seek with Nawaaf. Or played ball. We laughed the grass green and rolled in it. Dimas taught me many games that I have since played with, especially Pollyanna. He also helped mum and dad when things went wrong at home or in the workshop. But mostly he rode with Yoko. Yes, they did!

I still don't understand why someone cut off much of Dimas' left ear! I would never be happy if someone had cut off my ear! Dimas is often in green riding or hunting clothes. And when he comes here, Nawaaf livens up tremendously, because he always brings something good for Nawaaf. But who is Mrs Annabella, big and pretty with her hair up? Yes, Annabella lives up to her name and sews, knits, weaves for Yoko. And her slightly dense, happy husband, Soma, is a skilled winegrower who loves his wife and loves to

sing. When he was younger he performed on the big stages down south. After an acclaimed role as King Richard III, he took the surname "King". And he still knows the King's great monologue about the winter of our despair. Soma King doesn't go anywhere without his two big Epirus dogs Cross and Cheeky, who can never remember who I am. He drives for us when we go to town. Yoko has to do that every week. And he also brings us food at the same time.

"It's my honor, ladies!" says Dimas with a twinkle in his eye. - Mrs Annabella smiles kindly at me and says to Yoko:

- My Dear Miss Yoko, the green satin is finished tomorrow. I am very grateful to you.

Very grateful! - And Yoko answers politely:

- Well, sweetest Mrs Annabella, You are the one for miles around. You are a source of joy when I get to see it; and preferably tomorrow. - Yoko throws a small package up to Dimas, and Dimas throws another small package down to Yoko with a:

"Money in and out." And we all laugh, but I don't know why we laugh. Yoko waves and says:

- Eutille, tell Dimas how you slept one night last week and who you dreamed about! - I get a little red in the head:

- Yoko! It's too embarrassing.

But all three of them look at me expectantly. So I have to deal with it:

"I sleep close to the room behind the workshop where Nawaaf sleeps." Annabella chuckle a little. - Yoko shakes her head:

- You don't have to say that. - And Dimas looks at me seriously. And I continue:

- I couldn't sleep but talked to Nawaaf a bit. And when I said, "Who do you like best?" he lifted his head and looked straight at me. Yes, as soon as I said "who?", he was immediately on edge. And finally I fell asleep and dreamed. Dreamed that someone was knocking loudly on our door. And then Nawaaf shouted from his room:

"Who..." - Dimas interrupts me:

- Eutille! may I guess ... he lets go of the reins and elegantly jumps down from his horse

Zalto, and takes a few steps towards me with open hands: ... what Nawaaf did shout? - There is complete silence as I nod. Dimas wipes one eye with a handkerchief and says quietly:

"Who is the father of the child?"

I nod again. Yoko is completely pale and Dimas embraces her and she embraces him. They stand together like that for a while

4. The Santu stone, Nawaaf and Mrs Bao 9

When I'm left alone with Yoko, we go over to the grass behind the house. At the gable to the north, many years ago, a large tree stood and pushed against the house. An oriental tree. But then a small fig tree grew up and pushed the orient tree. Now there is a large fig tree and the remains of the orient you can sit on. The fig tree yields well and the figs taste great like chutney once you get used to the taste. But we continue up to the red Santu stone on the hill north of the house. From here we can look down on the roof of our house. I'm not sure if I like the Santu stone or if I think it's creepy. Actually, the Santu stone is made of many red stones. Looks a bit like a burning human with spread legs and arms. A kind of "Inukshuk". Pollyanna says it's as tall as four adults on top of each other. And perhaps the place was once the scene of human sacrifices?

Around the Santu stone are small and large gifts. Funny things from the wood or nice things that you no longer use. You always have to give something and take something when you are here. Yoko sets a miniature chair and takes a small crucifix like branch from the circle of gifts. The gifts create invisible bonds between people. I pick some blue anemones for the stone man, and take the little miniature chair that Yoko brought. We sit between two trees and hear the birds sing. Neither of us say anything.

Yoko takes the gold cross off her neck:

"When we kissed mother farewell, we also said goodbye to our peace of mind. But we still have two wishes left, Eutille. They are for you and Polly." She hangs it around my

neck. And now I'm embarrassed again. I cry and tell Yoko that I messed up with her secret jewelry box and...

"Stop! Eutille, I've been talking to Pollyanna. You just wanted to protect her." Yoko hugs me:

- What about me? I used my life's desire to climb out of a well that I myself had crawled into? - We smile with relief at each other and at ourselves. I breathe deeply and blow away small flies. Yoko smiles:

- Polly often tells me that I should let a child be a child and let an Eutille be an Eutille. But you are on the verge of becoming an adult, Eutille. And you must become a whole person, not just a stick in the stream.

"Thanks, Yoko, Am I so ugly!" Yoko, laughing and shaking me:

- Eutille, you are sweet and beautiful like a day in paradise. But you are also living. Live your own life. And life is more a time than a thing. We are like drops in a rainbow. You can understand more and more, and dare more and more. I don't think we're helping you by sparing you. You must know who you are and who we are. Our secrets must be yours too.

- Yoko! I will also try to tell more than I usually do. If you will just listen to me without shaking your head. We shake hands. Somewhere in our wood, a tree begins to be felled. And from the other side - crunchy steps. A puny old man in a long worn coat.

Nicodemus! Confusion and fog talk gathered in one person. He himself believes being a prophet. Yoko calls him: "wood fool in the second power". Mother took care of Nicodemus - defended him. She might say something like:

"Memories can speak - love can sing - and poverty can prophesy." Dad just endured him. Pollyanna loves making fun and fuss with him.

Nicodemus comes up to the Santu stone. Greets us with hat and a deep bow. We rise briefly with a little twist:

- Thank you, Nico! Nicodemus takes a lap around the Santu stone. Adds something himself and fishes out an old whistle. Breathes in it in vain and says:

"I know of a strange flute. When you play it, there is no more sound."

He continues around and finds a crooked oil lamp. Adds a piece of amber himself. He turns upside down the lamp. Beat it free of crumbs:

"I know of a strange lamp. When you light it, there is no more light." We smile kindly at him, and he at us. Coming over to us. Putting the flute in Yoko's hand and the lamp in my hand. After which he quietly, as if he were talking about the weather:

"I know of a strange death. When it dies, there is no more death." He takes off the hat: "The Ladies!" and calmly goes down into the woods again.

Yoko and I sit for a while and heal ourselves. Two large blue butterflies swarm around us. I whisper:

- Pollyanna says that "first you are a caterpillar, then a sleeping bag, and then you are a butterfly. It is a magic art, but we are not the magicians". Yoko smiles:

- Yes Tille, soon we will be three grown women! - I gather courage and ask:

- But Yoko, what happened before with Dimas and you? - Are you going to have a child? Is that why...

"Eutille," interrupts Yoko, looking seriously into my eyes:

"I'm NOT going to have a baby! I'm not even going to think about it, Eutille." Yoko takes my head in her hands:

- But I love Dimas and Dimas loves me!

Then I take Yoko's head between my hands and whisper:

"And I love you both", and feels like crying.

- If I had a child now, Eutille, I would be ostracized! They didn't want anything to do with me. Father's workshop had to close. And maybe my child became a new little poor Elnó, looking for something to eat on his bare feet and crying himself to sleep? And what would happen between me and Dimas? And you and Polly? Everything would be up!

"No, we need to tell you the truth about your dream and about Nawaaf. A truth which is also a kind of secret between us adults. And now it will be yours too," says Yoko, and drags me into the shadows:

- We have had Nawaaf all the way back to father's time, and we have never heard

anything but squeals, grunts and rumbling sounds. But what you dreamed was not a dream! It was reality.

"Well, Yoko, how? What do you mean?" it spills out of me.

- Do you remember all three of us, Polly, me and you, Tille, once rode deep into the forest to the southwest? Where it turns into umber with many large aurenita trees. Will be a dense and dark forest, and we rode for a long time in it?

- Yes! I say - we heard wolves and we found a big black burnt spot.

Yoko nods:

- Exactly. - There were once some buildings on that spot. And in those buildings the Motu robbers once lived.

- What does Motu mean? I ask. Yoko whispers:

"Motu" is the name of their chief: Motu Nimbleman. But I should probably say where.

- The robbers kept the farm with horses, big dogs, chickens, goats, sheep and a few small wild pigs. They walked around freely. But the robbers also had loot and prisoners. One of the prisoners was a young policeman named: Dimas Porter.

"Dimas!" I shout startled. - Yoko nods:

- The robbers wanted him to tell them the police signal codes.

Dimas was beaten and abused.

"And the ear?" it blows my mind.

- Yoko nods thoughtfully.

But occasionally Dimas could relax a little. Find treats for the dogs. And to the little pig who always ran to him when he was out. As far as Dimas' anklet could reach. He named his pig Nawaaf because it often said that. And Dimas noticed that it was always present when the robbers held a meeting. As they often did. Planned their next crimes. They shouted loudly and there was an excited elated atmosphere. Now they should be rich!

And they did not have to speak softly, for they spoke in codes that no one else would be able to understand; e.g. if someone was lying in the woods listening. But Dimas learned

some of those codes little by little. One of the most used was when Motu shouted: "Who is the father of the child?" which meant: "Who will undertake the task?" The little pig struggled with the words, and Dimas repeated them for it. Rewarded it when they fell into place. And immediately there was a slightly excited atmosphere, Nawaaf came up with his: "Who is the father of the child.. " followed by a grunt as a question mark.

Every day some of the robbers came home with loot: money, jewellery, fine things. Everything that could be sold. But one late evening there was a burning smell. Dimas could hear the animals, and shout for buckets and more well water. They dragged the stolen goods out and covered up. But the fire spread. Then they released the prisoners, they had to enter the burning buildings with water. Dimas saw Nawaaf behind him and threw his water on some burning properties. Smoke and steam billowed around him. And when the smoke drifted away, Dimas and Nawaaf were gone too. Far away.

Dimas was promoted and received a merit in gold. He had not revealed anything. The prisoners were freed and many of the robbers captured. - Some of Dimas' people later met Motu Nimbleman. He walked freely around the square in Stetta.

"Take him alive!" Dimas said. And they did, and asked back:

- shouldn't we cut him a little bit, his nose and ears are way too big?

"No, the judge must have the real Motu." laughed Dimas, and gave the bandit chief a genuine bandit smile.

- Unfortunately, Motu ate some poisonous hemlock leaves he had hidden on him. He failed to appear before a judge. - We have to go down again, Eutille! says Yoko, patting me.

Yoko and Pollyanna are my sisters and my best friends. But I also have others. When I need it, and I do now. I'm up the road with my wooden friend. She has a small sign, and her name is Mrs "Bao 9". And she is related to eight other bao trees around the forest. The baos are peace trees and the forest's signal trees. Behind here you have a green pipe. In that tube there is a club with the forest service's mark. You take the club and hit the tree a

little way up. Not really very hard. First you strike 9 blows, because the tree is Bao number 9. Then the people of the forest know where the blows come from. Then you strike 1 stroke: I need help. (E.g. my cart has lost a wheel), or 2 strokes: I need quick help. (e.g. is sick, robbers or dangerous animal), or 3 strokes: fireless - (it burns in a house or in the woods). You must repeat the entire signal once and only once. Those who hear the signal then pass it on by repeating the entire signal on the other bao trees. I don't know more about it.

The blow sounds deep and strangely hollow in the chest, and can be heard far away - except in the rainy season. It is a very beautiful sound. I sit up against my tree as I have seen Pollyanna do. Clap my hand on the tree a little to wake up Mrs Bao, and maybe whisper:

"Dear Mrs Bao 9, what shall I do, I stepped wrong when I jumped down from Pirallo?"

No rustling means: I'm sleeping, Eutile!

A whoosh means: it will probably go.

Two swishes mean: cold water on.

Three rushes means: a trip to the Ubitorama Hospital in Setorium.

We talk like this until I suddenly wake up - when someone walks by.

5. The deep water of love

But why did I rummage through Yoko's cupboard and what did Pollyanna tell Yoko about it? Unfortunately, I probably have to say a little about that. But I'm ashamed of it.

Yoko had gone to town that day. Soma King fetches and brings her. You can hear him singing far away. The old songs about freedom and togetherness that Cross and Cheeky sing along to. Pollyanna likes to help Yoko in the workshop, but often works for Master Bartos in the Blue Hall. So I'm often alone, "because I'm so big". But that day Pollyanna was home. She had stayed home because her "red mazurka" was too bad.

- Mine isn't that bad. Swap swop trade? I said, regretting it immediately.

- It doesn't matter, I taught you to tease myself. She was in her dark red work trousers and a tightly woven smart light grey shirt which bears small reminders of what she has worked with over time.

The weather was good. We both worked in the workshop. Had to take it as we could now. In the afternoon we heard a carriage. A work-spring-trolley. Beautiful yellow with red wheels, behind two beautiful furious horses. Driven by Mr Noah Courson dressed in a patterned red shirt under a black blue cape, black pants and black shiny shoes and with a silk black top hat. Courson with dark hair, and calm serious brown eyes that light up in a smile when he speaks. A velvety bass voice! He always carries a dark shiny cane with a rather large golden lion's head.

I could hear them laughing as Pollyanna ran up and took the lead horse's halter. Noah Courson loves horses and carriages:

- Pollyanna, I've given up on buying the big two-team Cunningham. It is fast. My horses liked it. I then asked them, "Can you maybe maintain it if I buy it?" But they shook their heads. Horses!

We have taken over Mr transit agent Noah Courson from when we had father. Courson comes quite often and talks to Yoko or Pollyanna. But he almost never brings any furniture. Only papers that they talk about for a long time. But that day he had - a nice display cabinet with him. In dark wood and bluish glass. Pollyanna flatly double bobbed: "She'll be happy about that!" He stopped:

"And for you Miss Lipatel, I also have a ... no, that will have to wait." Noah is sometimes very formal, other times he is pot and pan with us. They went into the living room with the cabinet. Knocked and screwed a bit. And there hung the cupboard in our living room. In Yoko's living room, unbeknownst to her!

"Eutille!" cried Pollyanna, clapping her hands. And then we sat around the table drinking Santa Rita and I drank coconut with raspberries:

"You're always talking about papers, Pollyanna. What are you doing?" - Pollyanna smiled:

- Noah, what are we doing? What do you order for us?

- Miss Eutille, what is my profession? Someone hangs lamps, someone pulls teeth, and someone is a transit agent? Noah smiled and nodded at me with questioning hands.

- What is a transit agent? I asked. Pollyanna set her Santa Rita:

- Isn't it just someone who buys and sells things on behalf of others?

- Rightly guessed Miss Eutille! And yes, Pollyanna, and often where the seller and buyer live far apart. Noah went on:

- Miss Eutille, You are currently sitting in a soft, warm chair. You want to sell it for the best price. And you're asking me, Transit Agent Noah Courson, to do it. - It's just a thought experiment, said Noah, rocking from side to side. He continued:

- At the South Pole you stand in long rows, straight up and down with your beak in the air, and freeze. The lack of chairs is obvious. The transit agent sells the soft warm chair (pointed at me) and in return gets a barrel of fresh South Sea fish. (Noah pushed around our table vase.) Selling his barrel of fish in Maccogunawira. A place where fish don't actually exist. In return, the agent receives a pallet of ostrich feathers in Maccogunawira. (He let the vase and the top hat switch places.)

Yes - and back home I get more chairs for what my pallet brings. Chairs that really aren't my own. I get a fee from the trades and arrange papers for freight, insurance and customs declarations etc. I am a transit agent, Miss Eutille. But make no mistake, I have skilled people to help me. The whole thing is probably a bit exaggerated.

But I, Eutille, thought it was embarrassing that my favorite chair could be sold from under me.

- It's something we're playing with, Tille! said Pollyanna. Then I asked a little timidly:

- Have you ever sold people, Mr Courson?

- Noah thoughtfully drank a little of his Santa Rita:

- I have never sold slaves, if that is where you want to go. Don't remind me! - and Noah

leaned seriously towards me:

- Turning people into animals, even into things, is a crime. Excuse my tactlessness, Miss Eutille! That I sold your chair in mind. No one should have the honor of selling yourself. I will never allow that!

- It will also be with me across the board, Eutille, you can trust that, said Pollyanna.

Noah drank again from his Santa Rita and smoothed his fine hat:

- Miss Eutille, no, I have not sold people. The closest thing was ... I better tell it all over again. In case of difficult or valuable shipments, I or my head clerk Goro are happy to go with the cargo. It's probably been three years now. And our cargo was going to Elnadi Metropolis where the buyers were waiting. I stood on the deck of the brig Wilmersborough, where most of our cargo was lashed. We departed from Avantis and had good winds. The weather was fine. Stringed and fastened to the foremast stood a cage with rags and straw at the bottom. Shielded from the wind. The cage also contained a small inverted bottle with a spout and clean drinking water and three young Tuscaloosa monkeys: Mumu, Hina and Vidu. Two girls and a boy, if you can say so.

The cage had moved. Gentle Moses! now there were only two monkeys in the cage! The crew had otherwise lashed the cage with a pair of lavét knots on a strong calcutta line. Vidu had untied the knots and opened the cage! Now he was jumping up and down on a bollard excitedly calling Mumu and Hina. But they didn't dare go out on deck. They were sitting in the cage holding each other and looking at me with wide eyes. I, Noah Courson, stood there, happy and proud to be a transit agent. Now I glimpsed life itself reflected in Mumu's and Hina's startled eyes. Eyes that moved into me in a way so that I meet them in other eyes when I least expect it. Even in eyes that don't want me well.

It was heartbreaking! Perhaps all three of them would be sold on to painful animal experiments. Or work, chained alone to each coconut palm. The rest of their lives. Or maybe sold to a circus where they had to perform and live in a dark box. A box that was not much bigger than themselves. Living off waste and forced into dangerous arts. In short, forced into a life they were afraid to live.

"But what happened?" it came from Pollyanna and me.

- You mean Vidu? He played hide and seek with the people of the sea. And when they had surrounded him, he took the trip up the mainmast above us, as if shot out of a chimney. Mate Dathan Bodman came on deck. Spat far in the leeward and whistled the sailors up the wobblings. Vidu was waiting for them. They tried to take him. And suddenly he was somewhere else. Running, jumping and twisting high above us. Or hung by the feet and made funny faces. He was like an ordinary seaman who had to pass various tests. Dathan whistled his people around the rigging. He was big and powerful. Spoke like a bargeman! I told him to whistle his people down so no one got hurt.

"As you say, Sir!" Dathan whistled them down and hummed to me:

- I've never lost any nautboys in my pay. And why? Never hire gumbomen and shitfumblings!

Vidu disappointedly followed the people down from the rig. Dathan and Vidu gazed each other closely. Dathan with open hands:

"Dullu makalipa! Who are you? Are you looking for hire on board? Or are you a flying fish for the chef?" Merriment among the sailors! Vidu hung in the mainsail halyard three meters above him and almost shouted:

"Maaah-wii! Nukodokonukodokodoko!" - Bodman, with flat hands, called "STAY PUT, BOYS" to his men, winked at me and squatted down. Vidu let himself slide down a good distance. Looked around - landed in front of Dathan. And accompanied by an astonished sigh from the crew, their Mate Dathan Bodman stroked his cap. He held it out to the monkey and looked away. Vidu took it hesitantly. Examined it very thoroughly - and slid up on Dathan's knee! The big man didn't move. Vidu leaned forward and looked up at his face. Dathan did not allow himself to be enticed to look down. Vidu examined his jacket pocket, found a wrapped piece of sweet. Held it up to the light and sniffed it. Ate it with paper and all. The men clapped their hands and stretched their necks to catch it all. In another pocket, Vidu found the pilot's whistle. Tried to look through it, held it up to his ear. Placed it in Dathan's open hand. The monkey continued onto his shoulder. Examined

him for edible parasites. Tugging him appreciatively by his right ear, he placed the mate's cap on the man's head. With the shadow well down in the eyes. Everyone stood as if paralyzed when Made Dathan Bodman calmly got up and slipped to the cage. Mumu and Hina stared at him in disbelief as he carefully tucked Vidu in to them, and quietly closed the cage:

"Lash it Flemish! Otherwise we'll have him again soon." and to me:

- Transit agent or not, you owe me a piece of sweet!

Pollyanna and I couldn't stop clapping. Noah thanked us:

"We used a clause in the contract and bought the monkeys free at a price 15% above the appraisal. Now they live in the great Bello Seguro National Park, where they can feel safe and are with fellow species.

"Young Lady." Noah said, finding a violet package and placing it on the table in front of me.

- A little present for you. If I may call you by your first name. Plain and simple: Miss Eutille Lipatel are from now on by Eutille for me. And you must always call me: "Noah!" and I will always be yours... No, Eutille's humble friend and protector! Pollyanna smiled mysteriously. And soon the two were sitting in the shade by the north gable with some papers.

And I looked to Nawaaf. Later I lay down in the grass. I could hear the two talking softly together:

"It's been one of the very best years," Noah said. "We can go for it early in the new year."

Pollyanna asked:

- and I continue with Master Bartos?

- Yes, if Trenson ... no we completely forget the most important thing - he took his stick and the lion's head opened its mouth. And he took out a nice little package and gave it to her. - Pollyanna opened it with a:

"NOAH!" and he put a ring on her finger, and they kissed each other. And he wiped away her tears and pulled his cloak over her protectively.

"Maybe you said no, I took the chance. I'll just have to figure it out myself."

- A secret dream, Noah! Pollyanna whispered something to him, cried, and hid with him.

Pollyanna cried! I went back to the workshop thinking:

How rude! Yoko gets the big, beautiful cabinet, while Pollyanna has to make do with a small ring. Why does he have to make her sad? Why? - He must not have "my Pollyanna!"

It flew through my head as I found Yoko's box of small fine things, opened it, held it up to the light, poured the contents out on the table - but the gold cross was not there! How? .. One of them had to wear it? I thought.

"Don't you want to see your present?" said Pollyanna behind me.

- Do you have the cross? I said. Pollyanna shook her head:

"No,"

- It's probably in Yoko's secret box, Noah thought.

Maybe he's taken it, I thought. - We sat down and I tore the violet paper from a nice little wooden box. And in it was a nice heart-shaped locket with - a picture of - my father and mother! Our Lucas and Mila! They hold each other and look happy.

"And there's the gold cross!" said Pollyanna, pointing to mother.

- And they have their rings on, Noah said. And I looked up and saw that Noah was also wearing a ring. Similar to Pollyanna's new ring! Now it was my turn to wipe away a tear. Noah and I held each other for a good long moment! And I won't say what I whispered to him.

6. Unexpected appearance

It is raining close from the south. Last night Nawaaf was restless and sat up many times. He grunted deep and menacingly, gritting his teeth. And in the morning there are clear bear tracks around the house.

Today is a busy day. We are busy with each of ours. I am doing my homework on

physics and French. Yoko designs parlor tables with inlaid ivory. Pollyanna practices using a brand new set of rotating knives. Late in the morning the rain stops. And we got a big bouquet of pink roses! Sat outside our door.

"Leave them alone, Eutille. They must have the big brown vase", shouts Yoko.

- None of us have a birthday, I say. Pollyanna comes up wearing an apron. She looks at them:

- They are from Master Bartos. They come every year on the anniversary of him becoming our guardian. - I then find the brown vase and wash it in the tub. Rub it clean with an oilcloth. Fill it with water. Put it where the large glass vase usually stands. Takes a small rose knife and fetches - the bouquet is gone! I call on Nawaaf. But he is in the woods. I don't see any flowers. Away has really been at stake here!

"The roses are gone!"

- We don't have time right now, Eutille, shout Pollyanna and Yoko.

I have to go back to the "French physics". But it's hard to concentrate. Something sounds like someone is sitting in a big conch shell and...

"BEAR!" cries Pollyanna.

The bear has returned. I see it through the living room window; it cannot be opened. A huge brown-grey teddy bear. It paws calmly from side to side with inward-facing forepaws and with a bouquet of flowers in its gap.

"It has taken our bouquet. Barto's roses!" I shout.

- No, you don't say that, it comes from Yoko. Suddenly it is finished with the flowers. Is on the back legs. Presses his big snout against the glass. I look at it respectfully and it looks kindly at me. I turn to call for Yoko. Coming too late! Because there is a bang. And a shower of broken glass flies into the dining room. I scream and Yoko comes up from the workshop, Pollyanna is in the kitchen. Big paws with long claws take turns fencing in our living room. Then the head comes in and smacks right and left and up. It scrambles to get in. - But gives up and withdraws. Not a sound! Pollyanna shows off our best frying pan, which she holds with both hands and white knuckles. It is piping hot and still oozing. And Yoko suddenly stands by me and says several times to herself: "Lipatel, Lipatel!".

She stands with the sharp and very pointed dagger from father's time. It bears the engravings: "The Mellivora Force" on one side, and a degree sign with number and signature on the other side. In Yoko's hand, it looks like it's part of her body. That's how dad kept it too.

"Your left hand is bleeding, Tille!" she whispers.

- Pollyanna carefully sticks her head out and says:

"It's gone. It could smell we were cooking. I'll take that as a compliment!" Me and Yoko also look out and now Nawaaf is out there! And the bear is gone. Yoko washes and bandages me, The wounds are not bad. I change clothes and sweep away shards of glass. Then we eat our soup and fried food with dried long bread. - Yoko says:

- Now it can be opened. The window. Imagine if it had come in! - I point with my spoon:

- It had such lovely eyes!

- Yes, smiles Pollyanna, it will look at you with the same lovely eyes while it gnaws your intestines into itself. And it will miss you when you are eaten.

Next day. We are up early. Nawaaf has returned home after his night's merits. Yoko straightens the window frame, cuts new glass, and mounts it in the frame. Pollyanna builds a window bar out of iron bars and fastens it with long iron screws. And I get a large bouquet of white perennials mixed with dark red leaves, and put the fresh bouquet in mother's large glass vase. She got it from a customer. It is shaped like a cylinder and often stands empty in a corner of the workshop. Dad used it as a sort of wastebasket. Then Yoko is picked up by Soma King, who will drive her to town for materials, and Pollyanna is at home in the workshop. And me?

I am reading a book called "Mathematica". We like to read what all three of us have. But for me, the Santu house is my school and my home.

After the lunch break, Pollyanna and I go for a walk. We walk hand in hand. Go into each of our thoughts. Finding ourselves. Find each other and laugh together in the middle of the woods. When I walk with Pollyanna, we collect memories. As Pollyanna used to

say it:

"Put the past and the future together and they melt down to become the present. And the present becomes the new past. It's gathering memories." she says. We both like to see new places in the forest. Every time we find something new. Pollyanna sees the most incredible things. Today she suddenly stops and points to a large tree:

"Eutille, can you see an animal in that tree?"

- I don't see any animals.
- The tree, Tille! Looks like an animal.
- I think it looks more like a tree.
- Can you see that light hole? It's the eye.

And suddenly I can see it: A huge kangaroo. Pollyanna smiles motherly at me:

- You must have it, little Tille!

Now and then Pollyanna goes to a tree and leans against it with her eyes closed. She could say:

"Greetings, Mr Jaca Dios!" And without it being visible on her face, she might give voice to the tree. More deep and rich:

- *Miss Lipatel! And your present?*
- I can stand my position, Mr Dios. And your family?
- *Close to the five thousand seedlings this year.*
- It hurts me, my good tree! You were hoping for more, I think.
- *The rainy season was too much last year. Many of the little ones were washed away, Miss Lipatel.*
- This strange sound! Is that your stomach, may I ask about it?
- *There is nothing wrong with your hearing, Miss L. But it's the cursed umbanomes that are gnawing at the roots, feet. Forget it, My Lady, each has its own.*
- Sorry in the forest, but where do you and your tree family basically come from? - The tree rustles in the wind:
- *Fiala, Fiala, Fiala...*

"But Pollyanna, do you know all the trees in the forest?"

- No, Tille! If I knew all the trees in the forest, the forest would lose its mystery. And mystery is the stuff reality is made of. Therefore, you can go for a walk in the forest without knowing the names of the trees.

But there are bears in our part of the forest at the moment, so we have to stop now and then giving "Bear calls." You put your hands over your mouth like a funnel and shout three times:

"BEAR, BEAR, ARE YOU THERE?" Because then it goes its own way.

- But why does it go, Pollyanna?

- Because it can manage to go while it is safe.

- But can't it wait and see what comes next?

- No, because if it is dangerous for it, it must start the flight by running backwards, but a bear has no rear wheels. It will think it is safer to attack. - The bear will taste blood. And when we no longer move, it will sit down and decide if it is hungry. It's a formality - because a bear is always hungry. But it just needs to smack back and forth a bit before it eats. It is its own cook, waiter and guest.

- Well, Pollyanna, we're not at all dangerous to a bear.

- Eutille, bears like the one yesterday. Let's say the male bear is called Adam and the female bear is called Eve. And it is autumn, when Adam and Eve soon sleep. They are busy eating thousands of dandelions and 10 kg of honey. And they have popularly said very little desire to share with anyone. But they also feel insecure around people.

- Why, Pollyanna?

- Suddenly one day a hunter is seen climbing a tree. And there is a click and a slap. And since that day, Adam has had pain in his knee every time he wants to show a strange bear how big he is. And Eva then tells this to their bear cubs that she gives birth to in the spring. And they pass it on to their descendants.

- but Pollyanna, we don't look like hunters do we?

- we smell like that.

- but we don't have a gun with us.

- no, but we climb trees, says Pollyanna, and soon after we are sitting in a big ginkgo tree. Fairly high for my taste. There is a peculiar smell here. Like forgotten shopping bags. But Pollyanna serves us two delicious mauta cakes:

- I got them from Master Bartos himself. We unwrap them and shout in unison:

"Thank you Master Bartos, that's almost too much!" Pollyanna replies, in the voice of Master Bartos:

- nothing is too good for you, my lovely princess girls. I, little Puno, got never cakes. And I have worked so hard to be able to give you these little pastry cakes. They shall sweeten your lonely poverty. God grant that it may succeed.

We enjoy our cakes and swing our legs in the empty space below us.

"I know you play at night, Pollyanna."

- It happens.

- You are sitting in the utility room.

- I don't want to wake you, Tille!

- Where did you get your leiya from?

- Dad bought it for me in the Blue Hall.

- I've never heard him play.

- No, I don't have that either.

- Why would you have it?

- A lady at Blue Hall had an office on the first floor. You have never met her, Eutille. She played when the bosses had gone home. That is, the other bosses. Played a beautiful harp, I thought. But was it really her who played so ... angelically? Beautiful quivering notes took life and air under their little wings. The lady's name was Erny Rafter. Never spoke to her. After all, she was the leader and we were not introduced. She always looked a little angry, but happy when she met others. Often wore a black suit with bamboo yellow cuffs and collar. Pollyanna sits a bit in her own thoughts:

A Christmas party at the Blue Hall is wild. There is reading on Christmas night, and

quadrilles are danced to music and to whoever else can sing. And one year I was lucky! Was introduced to Mrs Rafter and ... a little lyre. A real leiya with 19 strings. Erny taught me how to play! She has been like a grandmother to me. A friend with good connections, up there where the music comes from.

- Pollyanna, do you think I could learn to play the lyre too? Pollyanna lights up in a big smile: do you really want that?

- Yes, if you want to teach me, I say happily, and am just about to fall down. She grabs me:

- WHOOP! I don't want to lose a pretty pupil. Stay with me! We both laugh a little startled. And our laughter turns into deep coughs somewhere further up towards the dunes.

Pollyanna signs to me: It's probably the big bear Adam!

- Well Pollyanna, can't Adam climb up the tree here and take our cakes?

- No, the black bear is much better at it. Goes well with us as a main course and cake as dessert. - But neither of them needs to climb the tree, because now the two of us climb back down.

- But can't we just run from the bear?

- Yes, if we just remember to run faster than a galloping horse without a rider.

- Can it run as fast as Benjamin?

- We hope you never get an answer to that!

Pollyanna always finds something exciting. Today she finds a beautiful flower with two-colored petals, and I find a small stone that almost looks like a stone knife from the time when man walked barefoot and in fur. - Then we go hand in hand and pick "chew and count" leaves. They taste a bit like nuts, but you have to chew and count to 12 and spit them out before they taste strongly of grapefruit and birch bark. And sometimes we have to give bear calls, especially when the path is winding or there are hills!

When we get home, Pollyanna has to go back to the workshop and I have to go back to my book. I am beginning to understand the magic of numbers. Our father Lucas could

play with numbers like others play with playing cards. He relaxed about it. And after a few hours it is also my turn to relax. Pollyanna shouts:

"Gentle words on this earth, peace and angels with us dwell." - And a little later she is there, and puts her hands on my shoulders saying:

- Now we're going to have a bit of fun. You must have magic hour! Give me a few pieces of wood from the firewood basket or some bricks from the workshop. As big as a bottle. Take what you want. - We sit down at father's carpentry desk. Pollyanna lays out sandpaper, knives, hammers, small planes, files and the picture cutter box; and fastens a worn blue vise to the desk.

She sits in father's gardener's chair, the dark green one. It is smart! Can both stand still, tilt, turn and roll. And while working! I played with it a lot since I was not much bigger than it. Pollyanna takes my pieces of wood and looks at them while nodding slowly. Lays one and fastens the other in the vise. Lighting more lights and taking one of the knives:
- Sit next to me, it's best. I work so we don't get hit, Tille! Now you're sitting like I used to sit when dad had to show me something.

And then it's off! As fast as a woodpecker, she chops and peels away wood with knife and plane. Chips and wood shavings spray up and away from us as she turns the vise calmly with her free hand. Rotates the piece in the vise. She does the same with the other piece of wood and they begin to take shape. She moves to the sanding machine, which is driven with her feet. She changes the cutting wheel several times. Grates and grinds. It sends a mist of wood chips up around us. Then back in the vise, she fine-tunes with small, quick movements. The pieces have become much smaller now and look more and more like little people. A lady and a man! - I can't stop laughing. It's like they're looking at me:

"How funny they are, Pollyanna!" Pollyanna nods and glances quickly at me. She takes them with her free hand and files and polishes the figures and suddenly she puts them on the desk and says:

"Done!"

"Father taught me to conjure. These are his dolls that I have now carved. He called them Mortise and Tenon. If they do what they have to, they will be allowed to be colored by the famous Eutille Lipatel! Otherwise, it's straight into the wood stove!" says Pollyanna. We clear the dining table completely. She ensures that it does not tilt and dries it thoroughly: "The table is our dance stage." She explains. Then she places the dolls so that they stand in the middle of the table, back to back, and at a good distance. I sit on one side of the table, Pollyanna on the other. She carefully places her leiya on the table as well. And looks at me with a how-about-that? smile.

Then she winks at me and takes the leiya under the table with both hands. Plays a slow melancholy melody on it, alternating light and dark tones. She taps subdued beats with her feet. I'm just about to say, "What are the dolls going to do?" But I can't reach it - Mortise moves hesitantly in small jerks! Turns and stops. And now Tenon turns in the same way, but the other way. It's as if they spot each other and stop. The dolls move without anyone touching them! The Leiya stops. Pollyanna leans forward and blows some wood dust off Tenon. He pulls back a little! - Mortise now steps towards Tenon and he towards her. A broken chord from the leiya stops them both. I clap my hands:

"More Pollyanna!"

And now it really gets going with virtuoso music and dancing. The dolls slide around each other in circles and figures of eights.

"Well how?" I say, looking under the table. But Pollyanna pushes herself away from the table without the dancing stopping, and continues to play the leiya.

Suddenly Yoko stands in the living room with a:

"Polly! really, what a mess? - what a lovely mess!"

And Yoko and I dance on the floor until we pass out laughing. But when Pollyanna break off, we stop abruptly, and the dolls stand again still as they were at the very beginning.

- Let me try, I say, but can only squeeze the leiya a little. Yoko says:

"There's word from Noah. He and Dimas are coming on Thursday. It's about the . . . two

things you found, Pollyanna." Pollyanna stands up quickly and looks at Yoko questioningly. Yoko nods and they embrace each other:

" - and about what we have to do on Saturday when Master Bartos comes with this envoy, Avitla Stun". Pollyanna says:

"And Yoko, dir. Trenson has been over with the quarterly accounts. It was nice, he said."

Yoko gets happy:

- Thanks, Polly! I knew it! - Pollyanna laughs and claps her hands:

- You were right that we should stick to father's collections.

I help sweep first, then I take the dolls and Pollyanna nods at me. I go out to find the right colors for them.

7. In my cave

Up along the small spring. Down in my cave. Can best paint there. Something about the light. The birds? Perhaps there is less: "Eutille me one and Eutille me two!" Yes, and I think best when I'm painting or when I'm doing nothing at all. I know you shouldn't, it's a waste of time. But if I paint, I'm doing something!

Father called my grotto Cavitos and said "here dwell your thoughts and longings, Eutille! I'll build it bigger, you see. It's too low for you."

- Thanks, Dad! I said. My longings are higher than my thoughts.

- I thought so, father laughed. Wait to thank me until I'm finished! He carved it higher and deeper - and at the bottom is mother's writing chatol with my dolls and other secret things. There are also my drawing and painting cases. And my drawings and paintings:

The view from the Santu stone, down over the meadow but without the Santu house.

A white whale, with a cunning face and square glasses.

Yoko, with big blue Ulysses clouds over the well.

The volcano Mosuafra, which bleeds lava and vomits glowing stars.

Pollyanna, who walks on a tightrope between two beautiful horses.

The Ubito Mountains, which draw a wild evening sun down over the Blue Hall.

Myself, who might have found the key to a secret room in mother's chatol?

- and many other thoughts and longings.

I sit a bit with Pollyanna's two characters. Without anyone seeing, I kiss Tenon. He is so cute. Two real kisses: Be kind, Sir! Then I paint my pain, my longing and my fear out of my body. No strong colors, they strike back. I put the two dolls on a small shelf that I made myself.

"Dance!" I whisper to them.

"DANCE!" I shout, startled myself. I look out, no one seems to have heard me.

Then I lie down with a transformation ball in my mouth. I still have one left. Lies well on straw and leaves at the bottom of the cave. I lie alone and look up at the rocky ceiling of my cave. It's like it's breathing. This is how the ceiling within myself must also breathe. I see both ceilings merge and rise in height. Become heaven. The sky opens and lights, small bright lights. And I open slowly, very slowly, the most beautiful thing I own: The locket with father and mother.

Lucas and Mila.

Carefully, very carefully, Lucas and Mila kiss me. And I promise them to paint Yoko's, Pollyanna's, and my own life bright and happy. And then I close the locket again, very very slowly.

Sleep well!

And I dream that father asks mother to dance. And mother smiles and puts something down. And they dance on our table while we sing:

I could be speechless.

I could go blind.

But I will never forget

- you my love!

And finally they kiss each other.

Mom and Dad! And I feel a blue lightness. An inner weightlessness: You rise and stay, at the same time - a feeling that I remember from when I was little. One day we all walked in the woods. Mother had tied my hair bow. I was wearing my pink dress and white shoes. And I fell behind. I was small, but I had learned to count. Counted white flowers, counted snails, counted ... a boy who came out of flowers and snails. Stood by me on the path. Was my size. A handsome boy in yellow-grey breeches and a white shirt with a red rider. Dark hair and a smart cap that dressed him. We approached each other and stood still.

"My name is Dinu!"

- My name is Tille!"

A faint scent of man. He kissed me. I kissed him. We kissed each other. - They shouted: "Come on, Eutille! Come on!" The boy spun around and ran into a bush. The bush stood alone in the woods. Wasn't great. I ran it through - twice. He was and stayed gone! And Pollyanna shouts: Come now Eutille! I stand up in my cave and shout:

"I'm on my way!"

When I come back we are ready to eat. Sometimes Nicodemus comes begging. Today he will be allowed to sit with us at our table, I can see.

- Eutille, why are you always late? Yoko says. She moves the chairs a little. Nicodemus keeps his hat on in the living room. Tilts it towards me. He dips the bread into the soup. There is a slight overtone in his manly voice. A *what-have-I-done?* sound:

"Do you know that the Earth goes backwards? That is why the light comes from the east."

Yoko smiles and shakes her head a little. Pollyanna seems unchallenged:

- Take some of my talas salad! I did the recipe backwards, Nico. Hence Eutille enters from the east. Nicodemus seems in another world. He puts down his spoon and looks around. Pointing truthfully to the east, and prophesying with a deeper voice:

"Tomorrow your parents are born! Where were you yesterday?" The seriousness is immediately in the middle of the living room. With a wrinkled forehead! Yoko and

Pollyanna reach for each other. They stare at Nicodemus as if he were the gardener who has just cut down the wrong tree in the garden. We eat on without a word. Nicodemus waits until we finish. Then he puts his hand on the bread and looks around. We all nod. He puts it in his pocket and takes off his hat. Says casually:
"Death is nothing. Life is everything. Beginning is - not to exist." We curtsy him with a: Take care of yourself! ... We can't say: come home safely!

8. How to work with lacquer

Today I also help Pollyanna in the workshop. We cover a whole new rosewood chair. With curved legs with nice knees and feet. Medium padded seat and backrest. Pollyanna is responsible for the woodwork. It must be in glossy lacquer with a beautiful burgundy tone. The drawings are on father's easel. The cover is two-tone damask. Patterned with asymmetrical motifs in yellow and red. Much of it is from Annabella's hand. Yoko can too, but it doesn't go so fast. I have to underpin the chair while Pollyanna full the upholstery tight. And then she tacks the edges with gold decorative stitches over decorative ribbon. The chair is sold via Noah's contacts somewhere abroad, and at a high price.

Suddenly we hear the long grunt; and a little later a man appears in the workshop door. Short hair and small twinkling eyes. A faint scent of austin roses and garlic. Beautiful blue shirt held together at the top with a gold pin. His trousers and jacket are nicely mottled with drop-shaped oculi dots in grey tones. The shoes are also beautiful. Leather in two colors and with thick soles. He looks like a picture of who he wants to be.

"Ladies, if you can put it that way?" He says with a slightly thin voice that arouses joy in himself.

- And Miss Yoko, I suppose? - Now be careful, little grey man, I think. Pollyanna's words can be like darts. But Pollyanna lets the man simmer a little. And plant a final decorative stitch. Looking from two sides at it and from two sides at the man:

"My good man in handsome grey, to what do I owe the honor? Who are you, and what can I serve you with?"

- Of course, says the man - and a little hesitantly: But I probably imagined that you, if you allow, appeared more presentable - looked a little prettier, so to speak. He bows and smiles, and removes a small blade of grass from his trousers. And continues:

- Dear little Yoko Lipatel. - No, you can't afford jewellery, so you probably don't know about the famous Tiu jewellery. - My highly respected father, Master Jabari Tiu, owns the factory where all Tiu jewelry is made. There will soon be over 1000 employees. The man raises his arms to give his words more weight, and unwisely takes a step back:

"And I, I am - his elder, arh, son and heir: Kama Tiu. At your service!" he says as he tries to free his right shoe from an open can full of burgundy furniture lacquer.

Pollyanna smiles innocently at the man:

- Even though I am not pretty enough to wear your father's jewelry, nor can I afford to buy Tiu jewelry, you may well keep the can of lacquer you just took from us. We have enough of the burgundy number 23. But we will probably lack the peacock blue lacquer 30. -

Pollyanna opens a half-full can of blue lacquer, and takes a step towards the man with the open can in her hand:

"You see Mr Kama Tiu, my late father, Lucas Lipatel, owned this factory with three employees." Mr Kama Tiu seems confused:

- Well, my dear Mrs Miss Yoko Lipatel. Master Fiala Bartos was very understanding. Considering the ladies poverty.

Now Pollyanna stands very close to Mr Kama Tiu, whose eyes dart around:

- And with a suitable dowry could - and live safely, like my wife - lack nothing.

Pollyanna raises the blue lacquer can menacingly, and Mr Kama Tiu, still with the burgundy can on his right shoe, hobbles off to his horse, shouting:

"And this place of filth - no, Santu holy - if you please - it is by no means."

At the same time, Yoko comes home:

- Who was that gentleman? He didn't greet me! What did he want?

9. Big plans and secret messages

There is always a happy atmosphere when Dimas or Noah come. Now they are both here, but all look serious. Like a family saying goodbye to a loved one. Dimas and Noah embrace me in a triangle. And everyone is hugged or kissed, except Nawaaf. But he gets some nice root vegetables from Dimas. We have to have cold and hot - wet and dry and I have to fetch and bring. Noah has lots of papers and some fun envelopes for me.

Yoko fastens her belt:

"How far have you come?" Dimas shows some plans and papers:

"One part must lie facing the forest with space for raw material storage and large machines. There is space and access to the water mill we want to build. The other part, up towards the city with workshops and offices." - Pollyanna looks at me with the expression she has when she wants to take me on a trip:

- We want to build a large furniture factory. Yoko and I will be responsible for production, Noah for sales, and Dimas will be chairman of the board. And you must be with Eutille, if you will? -

- Why? What should I be involved in?

- You decide that yourself, Eutille! Yoko almost whispers. - Noah points:

- We will offer Master Puno Fiala Barto's contract to deliver wood to us, and he will get shares in the factory, as well as the double buyback price of his guardianship over you ladies. So Miss Pollyanna Lipatel and Miss Yoko Lipatel can marry Transit Agent Noah Courson and Police Commissioner Dimas Porter.

"But me?" I say scared.

- My Dear Eutille, my Little Friend! You will be redeemed, it comes from Noah.

- We are all moving to two houses close to Stetta town, says Pollyanna.

I have a hard time holding back the tears:

"I'd rather stay here - " Yoko shakes her head:

- Eutille, you still live so close to the forest, come to school and make many new friends!

- But I have you! Pollyanna exclaims:

- Well! ... - Dimas puts an arm around me:

- It's a big leap for Eutille. We'll have to deal with that later. But I promise you that Nawaaf will get a responsible position at the factory. How about: Mr Nawaaf Lipatel, Inspector of Sofas:

"Who is the father of this chaise longue?" - We can't help but have fun. Noah, having trouble catching his breath, and Yoko says:

- But it all requires Master Bartos to go along and sign the overall offer.

- It will be difficult to say no, say Dimas and Noah in unison.

"And there you come Pollyanna." Noah says. Pollyanna looks on me:

- Eutille, I have stopped at the Blue Hall, with Master Bartos. Submitted my badge. But the day before I quit, I found a few copies in Master Bartos' wastebasket. He was at lunch and I was alone.

"You stole them", comes a smiling Dimas. Yoko with raised eyebrows:

- No, she helped get them away. - Pollyanna leans back:

- It was a copy of a letter to envoy Avitla Stun, as well as a page with text in code. No one saw me take them and a little later I heard Mrs Tayman, as we call Tay, emptying the bins.

Noah takes out two pieces of paper:

- In the letter to sir. Avitla Stun, Master Fiala Bartos writes that he is excited about the envoy's offer for Fiala Bartos' three virgins! But that on Saturday, he will have a meeting with local business people ("us!"), who also want to buy the girls: "But you, honorable Mr Envoy, are very welcome to participate in the meeting." - There is silence and we look at each other.

"So we must be sold!" I whisper. Yoko moves closer to me and we clasp hands under the table.

Noah continues:

- The second sheet is in code. Me and Goro Tamura tried for a long time in my office to

break the code. But without success. It was only when we got Dimas on the team that things took a turn for us. You can tell what we have achieved! - Dimas looks in his papers:

"Thank you, Noah!" He passes the sheet around:

- It is a simple digit code. So we have counted letters for the big gold medal, can you believe. We now know the 6 vowels and most consonants.

- What is a vowel? I whisper to Yoko. Dimas whispers:

"Your name Eutille contains 7 letters. 4 vowels: EUIE and 3 consonants: TLL." he explains:

- Letters do not appear just as much. Therefore, you can count and guess. We know, for example, that letter O is E and letter M is A in this code. And we have found some interesting words so far:

Novo Budana / Loxur / Snakulpo / Ampundis.

We interpret it to mean that Pollyanna, Yoko and Eutille must be taken to Novo Budana harbor - taken on board the schooner Loxur - sailed to the town of Snakulpo - taken from there to presumably Patnariburg, where the royal house of Ampundis rules. But it is uncertain when that will happen. Noah believes that the actual transaction will only take place when Loxur is in international waters. - Dimas strikes out with his hands! At the same time comes the long grunt. Yoko is up and out by the doors. But there is no one to be seen. When she comes back, Dimas whispers:

- I have three men out there. They report fresh tracks in the woods where you saw the light. If something or someone comes close to us, they take care of it. Yoko is back and says quietly:

- What is your plan if Bartos does not sign, but chooses to sell us to the Ampundis Princes in Patnariburg? Pollyanna practically shouts:

"Can't we just run away?" I say:

"Can't we just hide?"

Noah stands up and points to Dimas:

- It will be the very last resort to escape. If we do it now, Bartos will have the law on his side. And the authorities, that is: Police Commissioner Dimas Porter, must help find you to Master Bartos, and get the criminals, meaning Dimas himself and me, Noah, put in prison.

- But that is nevertheless what we have in mind, if all else fails, says Dimas. Noah adds:

- It will require a great disguise and false papers. But do nothing yourself! Don't move from the Santu house here! Don't hide, Eutille! - If you try to leave the house here, he can strike and lock you up somewhere. And then it gets difficult.

Noah walks back and forth thoughtfully:

- We have a head start: Bartos does not know that we know the details of his plan. And that the schooner Loxur in Budana harbor loads eucalyptus oil, spices and barrel fish to ports far to the west. We actually know that via Mrs Miranda Trenson at the customs office. And we know from the police in Novo Budana that Loxur has planned to leave for Friday two weeks at the earliest. If you are taken aboard, Dimas' colleague in Novo Budana, Police Commissioner Maringa, will take over the case and investigate the ship. If it is then found that the captain and / or Master Bartos violates provisions of the guardianship of the girls or applicable laws, the authorities can bring proceedings against them. And we gain time. If not, we'll have to come up with something else.

Dimas also stands up:

- It will be in court, along with other minor charges that we bring against Master Bartos: failure to protect you girls and the house you live in. For example, we just had a bear on the loose. We have also noticed illegal hunting, heeling, lack of road maintenance. And not least irregularities in the accounts - found by our skilled agent Pollyanna Lipatel over the last year. Noah:

- The cases will take a long time and we may have the opportunity to negotiate a solution. One that forces Master Bartos to let you go.

So much now depends on Commissioner Mizuto Maringa. But if you are first married off

in a foreign country, it doesn't look very good to us. The big fish eat the small ones - get eaten.

Dimas waves a white paper:

- Thank you! We need all three of you to read and talk about what is written here. If you agree individually, you write your full name there, plus the date. And Yoko can give it to me. You are not allowed to decide what will happen to you. Even though you have not formally the chair to speak, in our opinion you should be allowed to express what you do not want and what you do want. It is only a draft, you can write your own text and sign it.

10. Good morning!

The next morning we are alone. Or are we? Dimas and Noah have left. But is still someone out there watching us? - It's Pollyanna's turn in the kitchen; Yoko and I take a morning bath together in the big tub. First we sit at each end and wash ourselves. Then we sit at the same end and talk quietly together. Pollyanna warbles, hums and sings one of her favorite songs as she sets the table.

"You mustn't swirl all the water out," says Yoko, and swirls quite a bit herself. Then we sit together for a while and listen to Pollyanna. It sounds so beautiful. We go along with the last verse:

There are a thousand olive trees in my heart.

I don't know how or why.

I don't know why or how.

I just know, they are olive trees.

There are a thousand children in small bottles.

I don't know how or why.

I don't know why or how.

I just know, I am one of them.

There are a thousand years up to the next sky.

I don't know how or why.

I don't know why or how.

I just know, we shall meet there.

"Yoko," I say,

- why, how about mother? What did she mean by grace? Is it something you can eat?

Yoko sits a little thoughtfully with her eyes closed. Then she takes some water and washes my back:

- Tillemom, if I wash you like that, right? And you now e.g. washing pollyanna in the same way. And Pollyanna might wash me, Yoko, -

"And you," I break in, "do Annabella wash?"

- Yes, says Yoko, and hugs me for a long time: You have understood. -

- But can't I just wash myself?

- Yes, if everyone has water, they can perhaps wash themselves. Until they have no water. But that's not what mother meant, says Yoko - and not what I mean either, Eutille. They are pictures of something that is too big for us to understand. But we can experience it.

"Then the table is set and ready," calls Pollyanna. And we get busy drying ourselves, jumping in the rags. And look in the shoes we want to wear! - While we eat Pollyanna says:

- Yoko, we'll use my teapot on Saturday. I have spoken to Noah and Dimas about it. And the leiya can also come into play.

- Yoko nods a little tiredly. Pollyanna shows her ring:

- And you put on your rings, right? On Saturday, it's serious, Yoko! - and whispers to herself: "They should give birth to their own children."

- Now you sound like a mother, Polly! Don't you believe I can think for myself? Dimas used other words: "I'll put mine on now. End up the secretiveness!" he said. Yoko retrieves her jewelry box.

- Pollyanna, I say, how is it that only one kind of tea comes when I or others pour from your teapot? But when you pour, the other kind of tea comes out if you want? I don't see you doing anything but pouring? Pollyanna make her conjure smile:

- Now you just have to listen, Eutille! Once, it was just after Easter that year, I drove into town with Soma. I almost don't ride anymore. It had rained but cleared up. And it was uphill and downhill. Cheeky and Cross ran ahead. They had found something that they thought was worth barking at. And when we rounded the hill, we also saw a nice gambo cart and a few people on the road. And with a piebald little horse in trouble. They had gone into the ditch! Soma shouted, "Stand quietly, and they won't do anything!". We helped the man put the horse behind us. Gambo itself had no plans to drive.

My name is Peter Twins, said the man, shaking Soma's hand and nodding at me. And that's my girl in the house, Mafota. Mafota kindly handed us. Soma told who he was and we greeted. Mr Twins pointed out:

"We had those puddles on the road. You never know what they're hiding. I tried to edge past us, and Miss Cuntly there slipped her hoof."

- Nice little mare! Yes, if you're into mud, you won't go here in vain, it came from Soma King. As we drove on I put a blanket over Mr Twins. Mafota helped and smiled at me. Peter Twins had come out badly from it all, I could see. Stains of blood? Seemed dark and stuffy.

- We go Stetta Nordmark and City from there, said Soma, without taking his eyes off his dogs. "Ale beer" barrels as you can see. And Miss Lipatel buys linen and lists today.

- Thank you, that's enough, it came from the man. I'll get help with the cart tomorrow. Had a job today for the high lords of Nolcut Castle, you know.

- What does one accomplish there, one might ask?

- Properties and plots of land, it came from Peter Twins. The strangers come - buy - sell - and sail again.

- And you, Mr Twins?

- There is a shortage of good interpreters. I am an interpreter, and more than that. It came from the man, who began to feel pain. And we drove on, most of us silent. Then the man groaned:

- My good friend, do you have to sing all the way?

We didn't get much thanks for the trip, but the next day a delivery man arrived with a letter and package. It was from Soma King! He had been given a teapot for helping Mr Peter Twins and his domestic servant Mafota:

"What shall I do with a teapot, my dear Pollyanna? Take it if you will!"

- You can probably understand that I wondered, Eutille. A big old teapot! But I became wiser. It has two compartments and only one spout. And by chance I discovered the art. When you train it, it's incredibly simple. But otherwise it's a mystery. When one day you marry a man who deserves you, you will get my teapot with two compartments, as a wedding present. And then I'll teach you that trick.

- Nobody wants me! - I sigh. And immediately they are both over me, hugging me:

"If no one wants you, I'll marry you," they shout all at once.

"Yoko, who exactly was Dima's colleague in Budana?" I ask. Yoko looks at Pollyanna and says:

- Dimas and Mizuto were in the same year at the police academy. They have since solved several dangerous tasks together until Mizuto was appointed police commissioner. His name is Mizuto Maringa. - And Polly, you'd better tell it yourself!

11. Oh, Poldo!

Pollyanna nods and looks a little to the side - holds herself - takes a deep breath - and then trying to tell us:

- Once I was alone in the forest on my beautiful horse, the tarpun stallion Poldo. Poldo was dark, shiny! Clear eyes. Rapid on go. Yoko sweeps the table with her hand:

"Eutille, Polly could talk for hours about her Poldo." Pollyanna nods thoughtfully:

- It started to turn into a storm with wind and rain and thunder. And it was getting dark. I was scared and Poldo could feel it. I wanted to take a shortcut to get home quickly. Short cut through a plateau with raised bog of small lakes and streams. It's called "Feux Follets", but people call it: "The Lantern Men's Theater". It was a terrible mistake on my part, because it was getting dark and I didn't know it very well.

I tried to steer with the wind and avoid low spots while patting Poldo. And further to the east I saw two lights or lanterns. It also went well for a long time, but then I came in where I saw water on three sides. I decided to turn around. But as I pulled Poldo around, lightning struck somewhere nearby: the whole area was brightly lit, and then there was a thunderclap like when a mountain falls. Poldo reared, a saddle strap snapped with a bang, and when we got down on all four, we were off the track. We were stuck! And we sank every time Poldo struggled to get up. I screamed and screamed. Poldo struggled and squealed. His eyes! Suddenly it dawned on me that my left leg was caught in something I couldn't see. And that Poldo slowly rolled me down that path. Time stood still for me.

As I struggled to pull myself out of the boot, I heard voices to the west where I came from. You're crazy, I thought, it's over with you and Poldo. But the voices came closer and I heard:

"One, two, three, stop! One, two, three, stop! One, two, three, stop, and lie down!" It was two men. One's horse lay down a little way back, they got it to do so. The other stood. They cut the saddle free from the one that was lying. Then they quickly braided some thin branches together. Lay branches and saddle out diagonally behind Poldo. Their voices were calm and determined. One man laid down flat and pushed himself out. He put a good line on my belt. I moaned:

"My left foot!"

"We'll pull you out of your boots!" they said as if they were talking about getting me ready for a rally. And quietly the man on the path made his standing horse go slowly a

little backwards, which is difficult! The line tightened and became like a bowstring. And I thought: now I'm going in the middle.

- Lean forward a little and hold on to this with your right hand and the line with the other hand while I count to three! - One, two, three, stop! - and relax completely and take three deep breaths! - The man on the path got the standing horse forward a little again:

"Done ready!" he said:

"We're pulling!" And I thought: it won't work! I get sucked down with Poldo before they can get me free.

- Slow move! Lean back a little more and hold on tight! The prostrate man said as he counted three again. Poldo alternately struggled and lay still as we irreversibly sank and sank. My left boot had now sunk completely into the mud, soon I was gone too!

But suddenly I could feel the muddy water gurgling down my left boot. My foot got wet and slippery. And swup said it, and my left leg was free. I was free of the boot!

"Bravissima! Take it easy Miss! Push you back patiently and turn a little with your back down. Get low now! Hold here with your left hand! It's beautiful. You're skilled, I've got you—I've got you! Support you here with your right hand and push and pull yourselves inside inch by inch!" said the man holding me as he half pushed, half lifted me towards the path while the line kept pulling along, and while he himself sank deeper in. The man on the path grabbed hold of the line and my belt, and pulled me in and up. I was saved!

And soon I stood between my two rescuers - and tearfully said goodbye to my beloved horse:

"Thank you for all the lovely rides we've had together! Sorry, sorry I'm such a bad rider! You could have been at home in your stable now." I knelt down and whispered to him:

- I love you forever Poldo!

The men saluted my horse and took off their caps. Then they held me comfortingly. Poldo didn't fight anymore and suddenly he had disappeared. Some big bubbles were all. Now it was almost completely dark.

"We're pulling in!" said one. The other said

- Drink some of this! Your horse is doing well now.

- How shall I ever be able to thank you gentlemen? I cried.

- I have to tell you: by being alive, said the man with the standing horse.

- We know this bloody theater of lights from front to back as if it were the small table. It is not a show we can recommend. - The path would also turn into a bog if we had tried to pull your horse out. Could have cost us all our lives. - Unfortunately, we cannot ride two without a saddle here. No, a saddle just broke. Yes, lose and win with a broken pin. But soon we will be on solid ground. And we walk you home. That's how it is! But you can sit on him here, he was the one who pulled you free! - they said and lifted me into the saddle. They went and held the horses. And off we went in the dark like that.

After each flash of lightning, we walked 10 meters and stopped.

"When we stop now and then, it's for the sake of the horses, they need to be calm now." said the man with the saddleless horse. I said nothing. I knew it didn't fit. The path was unsafe! - That's how we went silent for a long time. After some time it was a bit drier but still soft. He who walked the horse I sat on said:

"Many streams are small, slightly sloping." The other was on it:

- Yes, tilt your head slightly, then the moor is straight. - It went on and on, but now we went by moonlight. Suddenly the one in front said:

- Yes, and in fact it was here, yes, right here that we were, when we heard your beautiful voice for the first time! - They stopped, lifted me down and dried me. Gave me something to drink and introduced themselves as Dimas Porter and Mizuto Maringa! - and showed me two police badges, which in that lighting could just as well be something they had picked up.

"Oh Dimas," I shouted. "I'm Pollyanna! That was my Poldo!" And then I cried again.

"POLLY?" came Dimas in surprise, and he put his arms around me. Mizuto laughed:

- Good thing it's raining, men mustn't cry.

Both policemen were later awarded a Caritas in red and white for their heroic efforts.

12. We must stand together for our honor

When Pollyanna finishes her story, we sit for a bit in silence and hold hands in the middle of the table. Yoko says:

- You both have to help me down there. Have several things that need to be finished today. She goes to the workshop and Pollyanna and I clean the table and tidy up the kitchen. And I find the breakfast food for "Mr Nawaaf".

Yoko goes to dad's depot cupboards. There are several hundred preliminary drawings for his collections. Workshop drawings! Some of them look like soffits for a puppet theater. They all hang in small clamps that we make ourselves. Yoko fetches the template for "Tronston Chair - LP 337" and sets it up in father's easel. We will make 12 chairs. Each chair consists of 23 wooden parts in walnut wood. Cut and assembled by Pollyanna. Yoko marks the covers and calculates the upholstery for the many chairs. Pollyanna starts cutting. And I collect curling wool, "valker" and rollers. And it is also me who controls the fabric when Yoko runs it through the sewing machine. Straight but not tight!

Pollyanna says to Yoko:

"Are you still angry with me? - I mean Kama Tiu, and all that I ruined for us?"

A little later, Yoko replies:

- No, Polly. I've slept on it. Now I'm angry with myself. Hold right here Tille! - Pollyanna makes herself small:

- I couldn't sleep on it, Yoko. Now I see you were right. Why do I always have to clown around and make a fool of myself? And then with a half-full can of lacquer? - Yoko rolls out a blue fabric roll:

- No, it was stupid and wrong of me to say that you are ruining our business and making us powerful enemies. No one can use this against us without being laughed at. -

Pollyanna:

- Well... - Yoko continues:

- What you really did was to defend my honor as a woman, and our honor as a furniture factory. Yes, and not least our father's name and honor as a manufacturer. And you just did it so elegantly. Accepted the role of me. Said what I should have said. I can learn a lot from you. And then I come and throw dirt on you! You should have thrown all the cans at me. - Heaven help us, how stupid I am. And how happy Noah must be, if he gets you, Pollyanna!

Pollyanna stops cutting:

- Yoko, I don't deserve it! And I will never ever in my life, long or short, threaten anyone with half a tin of peacock lacquer number 30, and never again boast that father's factory had, and still has, three employees! - Pollyanna sits down and shakes her head:

- Without you two, I was a female clown traveling around -

"Now you stop Polly!" shouts Yoko!

"Yes, you stop!" I add, to contribute, even if I don't fully understand..?

A little later, Pollyanna is there again:

"But deep down, I probably have to give Mr Kama Tiu and his famous father, Master Jabari Tiu, the right: I don't appear very presentable. And what's worse, a huge factory with almost 1000 employees has probably voted on how handsome I am. And I guess I don't need to mention the result." - I cling to Pollyanna:

"You're prettier than I am!"

- You have the halo, Yoko, I have the wings, it comes from Pollyanna.

- I no longer listen, Polly, but I would like to contribute to closing the issue, says Yoko:

pt. 1.

Almost everyone praises me, Yoko,
for my hair, my face,
my nice figure.

pt. 2.

Almost everyone takes all the time
mistake of who is me,
Yoko, and you, Pollyanna.

pt. 3.

From this we can conclude:
If I'm lovely and beautiful,
you are the same. So it be!

"Bravo," I shout clapping:

"You are both beautiful and lovely!"

Pollyanna makes us lunch and I help Yoko test the finished chairs. And then comes the long deep grunt from an apple-eating smacking Nawaaf next to the workshop.

"So very good morning, Mr and Mrs Jones! How are you? Nice that you have your little daughter with you!" Yoko says. - And I see a tall handsome man in white cricket clothes with blue stripes and white shoes. He looks strong and nice and is constantly chewing on something or other. The wife is a bit smaller with a medium length red checkered skirt. Short-sleeved white shirt blouse with a big yellow club logo for something. She is beautiful. Smile holes! And with blonde hair, under an open button kiss. White sandals with fairly high heels. In the pram lies daughter Sussi, kicking and babbling merrily. Mrs Jones' voice is a little mouse-like squeaky:

"Dear Miss Yoko Lipatel, how cozy you live! We had an errand on Cherryway, down by the lake, you know. So it was a good fit. And good day Eu..." -

"-tille" I complete:

"Thank you very much Mrs Jones." - Mrs Jones laughs and points to my shoes.

- Where did you find those shoes, and see your pants? You must be a real forest girl. A teddy bear girl! laughs Mrs Jones - I draw back a little:

- I'm not allowed to talk to strangers, Mrs Jones. - Yoko winks at me.

Yoko strikes out her hand:

"Your Swiss table and the three Wiener chairs have just been finished. And we have closed the crack we talked about with a "lice" as agreed." - We set out the table and chairs. Mrs Jones pays Yoko. - The man studies chairs and table:

- The chairs are too dark, he says in a sonorous voice.

- Yes, says the lady nervously, we agreed, agreed something lighter.

- I don't want to sit in dark chairs, says the man, with large hands averting, and face turned away.

Yoko shows the color sample that Mr and Mrs Jones themselves have chosen for the chairs, with the same number as in the order:

"If you have changed your mind, we can sand the chairs down and give them a different shade, but not white, or other completely bright colors. I can calculate what it will cost and give you a day when your beautiful table and practical chairs are finished?" - Mr Jones is up with his left hand:

"Cost? We just paid!" He raises his voice:

- It's a mistake to make them so dark, anyone can see that! Good, you must be able to understand that! he almost shouts, and takes a few steps towards Yoko, widening himself.

"Well, well?" he shouts into Yoko's head as if he were taken out of a Shakespeare scene.

- Yoko stays standing.

- Mrs Jones sobs loudly and little Sussi in the carriage screams.

Yoko stands as a friendly stone support with the files of the case. - Mr Jones reaches for ... Suddenly, from inside the workshop, there is an ore-filled roar:

"WHO IS THE FATHER OF THE CHILD grunt" and there is complete silence. -

Pollyanna suddenly stands in the doorway with her right hand on her back. She turns her head and shouts into the workshop:

"We don't need any help! We've got it all under control!"

The Jones couple look uncertainly into the workshop and at each other and at Pollyanna. The lady picks up the little one. The man spits something out, walks softly over to Mrs Jones and says to her quietly:

- I go twice. Taking the table first. Might have the three chairs in the second round. -

Pollyanna asks Yoko:

- Is everything all right? - Yoko nods:

- A small misunderstanding. Mr and Mrs Jones are pleased with their furnitures. - Mrs Jones walks backwards with the quiet Sussi in the pram:

- Thank you, Miss Yoko! You understand enough. And how nice of you to help us!

13. The guests arrive

Finally it's Saturday. We wash and clean up. The filthy lat is my turn. Yoko takes care of the workshop and Pollyanna do the rest of the house. I help and pick a nice bouquet of "White Herons" for the table. We have to change into nice clothes. So we take turns appearing in the mirror with or without clothes on. I take courage:

"Do yours get bigger if you press them?" Pollyanna closes a drawer:

- Only if it's small hands that press. "Little people" she winks at me.

- Were yours just as small?

- Yes, mine was, says Pollyanna. Meaning not the hands.

- I didn't dare sleep on my stomach, it comes from Yoko. But don't be afraid, Tille! Love loves a person, not bodies. Pollyanne amuses herself:

- You are right, what a pity for you Yoko! They laugh and make me smile. Yoko shakes her shoes:

"Eutille, men! We have ours, they have theirs!"

- What do you mean?

- Have you heard about the time I had to start school?

- No, Yoko! Where do you want to go? Little school kids?

- Listen and wait, Tille! After my first day of school - how small I was...

- Yes, and how sweet you were ... then, says Pollyanna, and hugs her a little.

- Yes, I was good to myself, the first 7 years. Was afraid of the big girls, and mother thought I should be cheered up a bit. First day of school, and no tears. Or at least not many. Well, yes, quite a lot. She took me into a place. We sat comfortably, with a view of two brown horses discussing something or other. One with tote bag the other without. A difficult conversation! We had coffee and pretzel. Mum took the coffee and I got the pretzel. A big task for little me. At the table opposite sat two coachmen from the clothing factory "Worthy and Son". They nodded at mother and smiled at me, and were neither small nor thin. One drank directly from the jug, the other with big bristly hair and a beard. They talked like people do. That is, as a coachman does. The pitcher man wiped his mouth:

- You are right, the son is not that "Worthy" as is the father! And they laughed foolishly, so that the hair stood on end and the jug spilled. The other scratched his beard:

"The Mermaid and the Sea Serpent?"

- I don't envy you, Balle. And you promised ... I don't want to see them. We are a decent place.

- Go up the Blue Cat?

- We stay!

- There are many kittens coming here. Peace with that!

- Well, do you feel the same way, Balleman?

- With kittens?

- Yea, surely!

- Mine doesn't stand up. Sleeps around the clock. Pixy botty and all hell's creams. Can't shoot it off.

- That bad? Yuk! and the Wicked in cold baths. There and no further, I would say. Abuse, loose and booze!

- What about yourself, Grumse? Grumse turned again to the jug:

- I bloody hell don't go free either. Mine gets up with the chickens. But is too short - two inches and a beer. Walked a bit and pulled it. Like that, for myself, you know. But it misunderstood me! Got even shorter.

Then mother had had enough.

We put on our nice clothes. Pollyanna is in her fine bright dress which can change colour: It's my sylph dress, she says. Wearing it with her red shoes. Yoko is in her deep blue silk dress with a white collar, and with a nice two-tone belt that she even got from Noah. She carries her mother's cross and is in her beautiful white shoes with high heels. I borrow a black pleated skirt from Pollyanna and wear my white shirt with yellow cuffs and yellow collar. Around my neck I wear the locket with father and mother. And I hope you don't notice my worn yellow shoes. Pollyanna laughs in front of the mirror:

"We have to pretend being ourselves! It's not one of my best roles."

- Don't get lost in the world of words, Polly! After all, we have often been each other. Today we are going to trade a little of ourselves away. Buy precious time! Says Yoko. I take another look in the mirror:

"What do you mean, Yoko? Shall we, be sold ... today?" - but Pollyanna cares for me:

- No, Eutille! We just mean to be nice and polite. And smile at the mean slack gossip about our future.

I saved it, but now it comes:

"Can I borrow your nail polish and pins?" They both smile crookedly. Yoko pats me on the head:

- We have a total of 5 lipsticks. Eutille, lips can speak without saying anything, and they are landing field for some of your longings.

- But what color do you think?

- If others think it's your own lips, you've hit the spot.

- But Pollyanna's nails, Yoko?

- Different rules apply to nails, says Pollyanna. Yoko laughs:

- She might as well practice being an adult, Polly.

- I agree with that, but we shouldn't be too nice, Yoko.

I do my bear dance and it ends in guffaw and hullabaloo .

Then I cut bread and put out mint, mango and alto chutney. Stirs pan eggs and prepares

two types of tea for Pollyanna's two-compartment teapot. It's the black spicy "Christmas Coming Tea" most people like, and the sweet-sour-metallic "Kashikoi On'na Tea" also called "Halloween 22 Tea," which many also like, but which I myself must not drink for Yoko and Pollyanna. As well as make a pot of almond coffee drink.

Neither of us say anything. We just smile a little bit at each other. Then Pollyanna and Yoko say, "How can we.....?"

- We must sit on the two finished outdoor chairs and on the benches. The guests must ...

- No, the guests must have the finished outdoor chairs? Then I hear myself say:

- The workshop. It's much bigger! - And Yoko and Pollyanna in chorus:

- Yes, but there's no room, Tille! - But then we look at each other and we rush down to the workshop and move around and stack, remove and collect. Brushing ourselves and each other. Pollyanna claps:

- There is actually room for all of us: myself, Pollyanna, and Eutille at this end, and Yoko at the kitchen end. Noah and Noah's Procurator Goro Tamura, as well as Dimas and his assessor: Relan Unusu, along this side. And along the opposite side: Envoy Avitla Stun and his Attaché Sandip Comar; as well as, of course, Master Puno Fiala Bartos and his Chief Director Elnó Trensón; says Pollyanna. 11 people. It should work! - Yoko smiles:

- A good day should be praised in the evening, Polly!

We hear shouting and I have never seen so many people around the Santu house. Someone is carrying poles with posters.

"Who are they? What are they shouting?" I ask Pollyanna in a trembling voice.

- These are Santu people, she says.

- Are they angry with us? I ask.

- Pollyanna looks at them: For them this place is sacred. I mostly believe that they support us. It says: I AM YOKO, I AM POLLYANNA or I AM EUTILLE on their posters. But there are also a lot of people from Stetta, Blue Hall and from the police.

Noah Courson shows up with his briefcase, kisses Pollyanna lovingly and hugs the rest

of us. Yoko points with her hand:

"Why are they coming here now?"

- This is our audience. There are two wings. Something about your clothing. But now the Santu people have chosen a side, says Noah, and rubs his hands:

- You are their mascots. You live and work in a holy place; You are like beautiful little icons that emphasize the importance of the place. Such porcelain figurines should not be sold or married off against their will with impunity.

- Which characters? I ask. Noah lifts me up and swings me around, sits me down again: "someone like that!" - Pollyanna smiles her magic smile:

- And behind it all there seems to be a person with influence. Someone who pulls the strings? - Noah rotates his stick:

- A word here and another there. As long as they are true. Polly!

Yoko gives Noah a little hug. We wave to the Santu people and they shout: "We come when you call!"

Now I can recognize several of Dimas' people. Some of them are armed. They pull strings and distract people from the road outside. So the carts can come forward. From one of them comes our guardian himself Master Puno Fiala Bartos, and his right hand Dir. Elno Trenson. They stand and talk with Noah's confidential clerk Goro Tamura and with Dimas. Tamura politely asks to the forestry:

"My Dear Master Fiala Bartos, can your mood be made up in cubic meters?" Bartos laughs and rubs his hands:

- This morning a street kid asked why I wore glasses. And now you with yours, my good Mr Tamura. Now we just need Mr Nous Nicodemus to show up with a third question.

Then that day is also fun. Dimas will also be polite:

"How are your feet, Master Bartos? You can walk, but can you still ride?"

- Yes, thank you, Mr Commissioner! I have always liked horses. I also like dogs, if they are good with salt and garlic. Tamura laughs:

"You cannot be serious, Master Bartos!" Bartos pats Goro a little:

- My Dear Mr Tamura, you still have my seriousness for good!

All four of them are having fun.

I usually only see Master Bartos at Christmas time when Pollyanna takes us to the Blue Hall. The large light blue manor house where Master Bartos lives and works, and which is also the workplace for many of his employees. But the name also applies to the town around and the catchment area is also called Blue Hall. Master Bartos' office has a beautiful view of it. The office has elaborate stucco and figures in the ceiling, which is also set with round mirrors surrounded by flashing stones. A rather large crystal chandelier. A quiet scent of wood oil and smoke. A pair of beautiful red floor vases, always with white flowers and green branches. Large window sections. Red plush curtain drapes with white store's. Bright wallpapers with discreet fruit branches with golden apples. Panels and furniture in dark precious wood. The chairs with bearskin. And some large paintings with historical motifs. Behind his chair at the writing table a large oil painting of a small chapel and a campanile in a blooming park surrounded by woods; and in the background of the park a beautiful view down over the water. On the opposite wall, a fairly large theater-like fireplace, flanked by two bronze lions.

Master Bartos seems round and handsome and smiles all the way up his forehead. Still, I'm afraid of him. He is completely bald. Uses dark glasses shaped like two windows. Always wears big dark corduroy trousers and big light shirts with old-fashioned collars and cuffs with gold buttons. As well as plain vests, also with gold buttons. And he has several large gold rings on his hands. Master Bartos wears some special silvery shoes. They are slightly wide and high and made of snakeskin. These are expensive shoes that are comfortable but don't last long. He says that they were sewn for him after a hunting accident. He also has a special gait, like walking in fine sand. His voice is full and he speaks quickly while almost singing important words, and fences in the air. When others speak, he freezes in a suitable listening position.

Master Bartos grew up in a family of little means and great mortality. He was still "little Puno" when one day he was suddenly bequeathed the entire northern part of the

Ubito Forest. It made him grow up quickly, and showed his talent for buying and selling, managing and calculating. His business came to encompass many different industries. He married Joanna and they had boys Matteo and Steven. As all three later turned their backs on him, when he replaced Joanna with his secretary, Evelyn. The boys did well. Matteo became a doctor in a large clinic in the Blue Hall, and Steven created his own newspaper: Seguro Venture. But Evelyn replaced Puno with Adrian!

Adrian Leek is a painter. Large and relaxed. He paints portraits and murals. He is also known for his balloon paintings. He and Evelyn live up to the forest in the northeast, not far from the Tollstone fishing hamlet. A small wooden house he built himself. Yoko and I once visited them at Benjamin and Tuno, and I was allowed to borrow mother's cross from Yoko. But the trip went up through the Drome forest, known for its many strange colors and scents. But especially for the many large twisted trees. It is believed that there was once a large city where the Drome forest is now. We had been in it before, and Yoko is always good at finding the way. But since that day I haven't been to the Drome Forest. Never!

We were in good time and Tuno had no difficulty keeping up with Benjamin. We had some partus apples eaten while we rode. I clearly remember the taste from the baby mash I got as a child. In one place they cut down trees that were too close to the road. I asked Yoko:

"It looks fierce. Shall we ride around it? Tuno will probably want to."

- but Benjamin is too heavy. It is topsoil and stone. It is difficult to read, Eutille.

- Shall we split?

- No, that much did I actually learn. We don't do that. But if I shout ...

- I know. Then I will let Tuno go like fire in ...

- good. You know it! Say nothing, Eutille!

As we got closer, the forest workers moved towards the road. A somewhat mixed bunch, with axes, saws, ladders and workhorses. I would feel insecure if alone. But I

relaxed. Yoko seemed a little annoyed but not afraid. We got Tuno and Benjamin down in stride. Row side by side, as is recommended when you need to calm down. - The men broke branches from a felled tree, and stood with them in their hands when we came. The leaves looked like big hands in the air. Swaying searching green hands. Tuno was calm. As he was close to Benjamin. We passed the men, nodding left and right, and they were to lead:

"Thank you, Ladies! Thank you for daring to ride our woods! Isn't it a lovely day?" - That was it, I thought. Will nothing else come? Yoko was in complete control of herself:

- Keep going! Stay in step and stride, Tille! And I did. We rounded the next hill and were ourselves again. Yoko held on, and I with:

- Eutille, that's the kind of thing you come across. They live completely in their own world.

- They're just forest workers, Yoko. Very polite.

- Well, we'll say it! - We continued. The silence was back. That's typical Yoko, I thought. But that was then! - And there were Evelyn and Adrian welcoming us!

Yoko and Evelyn had a lot to talk about, while Adrian and I sketched small portraits of each other. We laughed a lot that afternoon! For example Adrian and Evelyn called her violin "Tytte". Tytte slept in her own little bed and they talked about her as if she was their baby who had to get up and burp or be changed. Yes! she made her violin belch and sound like a little child. Or almost speak like an adult saying: "Yes, come on!" Evelyn had come a long way with Tytte. She hoped for a place in one of the symphonic orchestras. Preferably in SPO, Setorium Philharmonic Orchestra. Until then, she had to settle for playing for us. Mimicked birds and animal voices. Conjured up invisible singers with Tytte. She played Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 3 in G major for us. Sometimes so fast that we couldn't see her fingers.

Adrian had also built a atelier behind the house. A place where he could work undisturbed and where he could store his works and props:

"Miss Eutille, come, I'll show you what I'm working on!" We went out into the studio.

A dense smell of oil. A divan and a couple of chairs. A large table with a battalion of oil paint tubes. As well as countless glasses and bowls with partially dried oil paint. Mixed in all the colors of the rainbow. Large and small easels. Shelves with palettes, paint cans and many stacks of sketch paper, brushes, cloths, scrapers and large rolls of canvas. On the wall a few bookcases with books and letters, all about Adrian's great passion: painting. And here you also had to find crayon, grease and wax colours. All imaginable graphite and colored pencils, numbered pencils and other sketching supplies. But also fun devices: microscopes, colored glasses and projection devices. Interesting things that I was allowed to look at and in. Large and small compasses and a small bottle with death's-head. On the opposite wall some large posters with e.g. complementary colors, color tables and perspective lines. But there were also some large charcoal sketches of Evelyn. Evelyn who turns her back on him, naked seen partially from behind. As well as many smaller sketches of other bare women in various poses.

Along the gable wall stood a large wardrobe with many kinds of costumes, and some large, really nice oil paintings, almost all of which depicted large flying balloons. Plus one or more women with long hair. Standing in the balloon basket or sitting boldly on the edge of the basket with their feet above the empty nothingness. Many of them also dressed in - nothing. Others in fanciful costumes. With telescopes in front of the eyes, or pointing out or down. Or sucking large lollipops. But also some with pets in their arms: rabbits, cats, parrots or indeterminate fantasy animals. The balloons flying in sun or dusk, over forest or beach, high or low. Some floating moored above a starting field with many spectators. Other balloons in landing and partially deflated.

"Call me Adrian, Eutille! As we have so much fun together." I bobbed politely and he continued:

- Many of my balloon girls are now famous models who do not lack anything they could wish for. They are my little larks that fly singing out into the big world.
- Are there no balloon men?
- Maybe a few individual ones. Otherwise they are sold. If I could, I would prove that two

South American nuns actually invented the hot air balloon.

- How do you paint women in balloons? Isn't it difficult?

- I "watercolor" balloons and women separately on watercolor-paper. And then unite them in the right size in oil on canvas with my brushes in marten hair and wild boar ditto. -

Adrian pulled out some of the paintings and placed them on easels or against the walls:

"Will you sit as a model for me, Eutille?" He sang, "Isn't it a lovely day?" as he breathed on my hair. And muted and close:

"Do you want to be famous and loved too? And will you be able to handle yourself and your sisters?" He whispered in my ear:

"W E A L T H !"

- Thanks, Adrian, but it's not for me. But I like painting myself. I have never painted balloons or naked people.

- Eutille, we start with one where you wear a nice dress in four colours. Then you get used to sitting like a model, and won't be shy when you have to sit cladfree in the same way. Simpatico! It will be two beautiful paintings where you choose the color of the big balloon yourself. You decide? I obey!

Adrian stood between me and the door. I suddenly had a strong urge for air and to be in many other places ... took a step forward ... Adrian put his arms around me and took on me. I wasn't prepared for that! I suddenly dreamed the dreams of a strange man. Didn't dare screaming! It seemed rude.

"Eutille, first we must find the woman in you—then we can paint her. If we can find the man in me, I can do it. Do it solomissimo with you, about you, for you!" Adrian's hands? Strong, searching, like toothless snakes. Trapped under my clothes. I tried to shield my body's secrets. My body!

- Shall we not - nh! - better go back in? I think - I - Yoko misses me, I coughed wailing.

- You would like to, Eutille, - he said calmly with a touch of impatience:

"finding the right size ... We'll just change to ..." - my blouse buttons popped like seaweed fleas, the necklace burst with a slap and I bled a little from my cheek. Then I

heard inside myself Pollyanna talking to the mirror. She gave me back to myself. Back to Eutille! and I shouted:

- LET ME GO! LET ME GO!

And it was as if the door obeyed me. It went up and Yoko and Evelyn looked happy and expectant. He released me and stood with my blouse. I found mother's cross on the floor, pulled up my panties and Evelyn picked up some of my buttons, tried to say Yoko read my eyes and let something fall ...

"We had a lot of fun! We were just about to try on model - costume dresses." came Adrian optimistically. "Don't think, I, that we, uh..." He got no further.

What happened did happened! Like when a balloon seeks the sky, but suddenly finds the ground. Yoko shouted loudly:

"EUTILLE!" as she on "-TILLE" hit Adrian. Hit him hard with her right foot, right where two legs meet and decide to be one body. Adrian cracked "OUAJE AH!" in the middle.

Landing relentlessly nose first into Yoko's left knee as she yelled:

"LIPA-TEL!" - there he lay bleeding and snuffling:

"MABULOUX! MABULOUX!—I'm working!"

We rode in silence for some time. Then we rode close, and I said:

"What do you think Pollyanna says to that?"

- Eutille, if it gets out ... I mean if you tell anyone but me and Polly ... well not even us ...

- Yoko, you know so much and can do so many things, but sometimes you think out loud.

And sometimes I don't understand what you say. What comes out where?

- You must forget it all, deny everything! - You weren't there at all today, Eutille! It's the best. It is the safest.

- Do you regret that I was with you? What have I done, Yoko. Say it straight!

- Yes, I regret that. And regret that you trusted me. Where was I when you really needed me? Who would look after you - cherish, protect?

- Well, nothing happened. You freed me, Yoko. I can't stand you crying. Who wants to

hear about the dim-witted balloon painter?

- Eutille, you don't understand it now, but you will. And then it might be too late. You have been abused today by a stranger. If it's the talk of the town, you'll never need to borrow mom's wedding dress. Even though a man may love you ... no one can marry you ... or any other girl who has been used against her will, or paid for it. - We rode on in silence, while I felt the nausea rising in me. Kept Tuno back. Opened my mouth but couldn't say a word. I jumped down and curled up in the grass. Screamed and screamed! She was holding me. It felt long. The truth was, that there was no consolation -

Tuno was in a hurry to get home, so Yoko had to track Benjamin a bit. It didn't take long before we almost raced to get home. Horses are bright sensitive animals!

But here in the Santu house, things don't go so fast. Our Saturday guests are not here until they arrive. Yoko is getting impatient:

"Why don't they come in?" - Noah:

- Master Fiala Bartos will wait for Envoy Avitla Stun to appear.

Pollyanna smiles resignedly:

- That's his business method, Yoko.

- What do you mean? - Pollyanna puffs a little at Yoko:

- To play two parties against each other, and then score the profit yourself.

The other guests begin to arrive: assessor Relan Unusu works in Dima's office, and is their contact with courts and other authorities and parties. He is the youngest graduate ever from the University of Setorium. In his time, Relan helped to write the current guardianship and to limit guardian Barto's power over us. He appears with stiff white flippers, short dark hair. Brown eyes behind a pair of discreet round glasses. He is well dressed in a dark blue blazer and light grey trousers. Gloss black shoes. I think he's a nice guy. Sometimes winks at me when he has said something funny to the adults. Relan Unusu brings us presents, I get a nice book with a lion on the outside. He greets kindly and says:

"Those ladies! A constant source of joy." - He and Noah exchange various documents and whisper together.

Then Envoy Avitla Stun appears with his attaché: Sandip Comar. Envoy Stun, with fine facial features and lively eyes and facial expressions. In the right ear hangs a small gold rod with a pendant of a yellow leopard in flashing citrine. With elegant hand gestures, he shapes everything he says. Avitla Stun is dressed in a golden red Kubina jacket, appliquéd several decorations - over a golden vest and matching trousers, and large gold necklace. Plain shoes in golden color made of a thin layer of lambskin, inside lined with red silk fabric.

Mr Sandip Comar is slightly bigger than his boss. Athletic, carries a faint scent of musk soap. With a platonic face like an ancient senator. Seems like a person who is both fully present and resting in himself. Comar comes in a multicolored seta suit with a high collar and light white shoes with moderate proboscis, and wears a silver chain with a white elephant in ivory. He speaks many languages, and yes, I suppose so. Because I cannot understand what he and envoy Avitla Stun are talking about. But otherwise I understand what they are saying - possibly.

"Yes, wonderful ladies in one and all, receive my homage!" says Avitla Stun, beckoning for happiness and fertility, bowing deeply to Pollyanna, Yoko, and me! Attaché Comar also bows to us with the same hand signs:

"Yes, accept my best wishes and admiration and a rising sun for the Ladies!" - and waits a while before he straightens up. Envoy Stun and his attaché Comar bring us a small gift: a letter knife with a black handle in ebony which is inlaid with a beautiful amethyst on both sides. We curtsy dutifully, and Pollyanna says:

"Many thanks for the beautiful knife! Now we can open all the letters about our freedom." Everyone now greets everyone.

Yoko and Pollyanna seem relieved when Dimas Porter holds the door for Goro Tamura, and they talk quietly together as they enter. Dimas has a kiss, and a nice bouquet of blue

chicory, orange sunrise, and red clover, with to Yoko. Goro Tamura is Noah's troublemaker. When a deal goes off track or when something special needs to be done, you call: "Mr Tamura!", or if it's Noah himself: "Goro! do magic for us!" Goro doesn't look that much. He is slim and light and is almost always seen in grey sixpence, and in a grey set of slanted tweed over an almost black glossy silk waistcoat on a bright yellow shirt with a two-tone flip and matching bow tie. He has slender hands with white gloves that he hardly ever wears. But he always wears a beautiful ring with a blue flashing gemstone on the little finger of his left hand. A ring that he let me, miss Eutille Lipatel, try on my 4th finger. And he always carries a gold fountain pen in his vest breast pocket. A pen that I have also been allowed to try writing with. The two things are from his mother and father, he whispered to me. He always seems happy and calm, like a schoolboy who just got the good grade he expected. His voice has a timbre that is piercing without being unpleasant. When he speaks, others stop.

Finally comes Elno Trenson, top director of the entire Fiala Bartos company. And Master Puno Fiala Bartos himself, they come last. Trenson has the many papers in two large briefcases. Both decorated with a large yellow Bartos mark on a pale red ground. In his time, Elno Trenson was a foundling adopted by Master Bartos. He got into a good school, took good exams in law and everything in business and finance. Dir. Trenson is married to the sweet Miranda who works in the customs service in Novo Budana. He has three brown-red marks on his right cheek from a snake bite. And people around call him the snake. But mr Elno is nevertheless very popular with especially poor people and children, with whom he often exchanges a few words when he meets them. And he speaks nicely to and about everyone. He is half-bald and always wears a brown bucket hat, grey-green gardener's jacket and bright brown work trousers. But Elno Trenson is probably best known for an episode on Blue Hall a few years ago.

Trenson had worked late and it was dark when he locked the door and left. But he thought he saw light in a few places at the top. Locked in again, and went up. Heard muffled voices snarling:

"The code!" - and a woman who cried:

- I don't know it! - When he looks into a meeting room, the furniture has been pushed around or knocked over. Mrs Tayman is lying on the floor with her hands tied behind her back. She's bleeding. Three men with knives and a pistol! They are dressed in dark clothes and rummage through cupboards and drawers. And stagger about with the small safe.

Elno Trenson puts his things and lists into the room next door. Takes a pointed adorned foil down from the wall. It is many years old. With a beautiful hilt, finished with three monograms after its three previous owners. The monograms dived in silver and gold. Rods and hangers with trimmings and ornaments. The fastening knob is set like a falcon in mother-of-pearl. The steel is one meter long, stands nicely shiny with a number of parade marks and with the word: "Damacen" engraved ricasso, near the handle. Elno Trenson lists back with the foil in saluting position:

"Gentlemen, what can I do for you? I'm really good at codes."

Mrs Tayman is fine today. The man with the gun was not to save. The other two were worse off than Mrs Tayman, and had to be carried down. They were wanted for nasty things. And Trenson? He pulled a stroke from the big bell and helped Mrs Tayman until help came. Carefully cleaned the foil, and carefully hung it in place. Took his things and drove home to his Miranda.

14. The meeting

Another round of greetings takes place, after which Master Bartos makes a short speech standing up to:

" - my three lovely princess girls. Your names are written in my heart and the flames of your beauty fill me with a faith in the future. A future greater for you than for me, Puno, who never went to a real school. Didn't learn foreign languages and customs; like the future I have worked so hard to bestow on you three lonely and poor women. May God

grant that it will succeed: A beautiful, golden future in love and happiness for all three of you!" Elna Trenson and Sandip Comar clap a little and a lot.

And Trenson gives us three orchids from Blue Hall: red-white, bright blue and butter yellow, each in its own bianco hanging pot:

"Water them a little and early in the day", he says and helps me unpack my yellow one. Pollyanna hangs them up so they are in partial shade.

Yoko curtsies:

"Welcome to you, Master Puno Fiala Bartos, and thank you for the beautiful words and wishes. You cannot give us what we already have: the memories of our beloved mother and father. But you can give us what we do not have: the freedom of the bird and the right to live and love. Thank you also to everyone who attended and your wishes, gifts and intentions for our good!"

All three of us make our greetings and there is some applause and bows. The gentlemen then recite in chorus according to old custom, while they alternately look up the stars - and down at the earth:

The word is the ship, silence is the water.

Lord speak! Woman listen!

- and we go in to table, guided to the right seats by Pollyanna and Noah. And the gentlemen whisper a little crosswise and then choose assessor Relan Unusu as moderator.

Relan thanks, and immediately gives the floor to Noah, who also thanks. He has placed his papers in a fan before him, stands up and praises Master Puno Fiala Bartos for his sympathy and responsiveness. He talks about our factory plans northwest of Stetta town. Everything is in place: the competence, the money, the permits; We only need the buyout of us three girls, which is a condition for cooperation! he says. - Relan Unusu adds:

- That condition can be fulfilled through two covenants of marriage. In the case of Miss

Eutille, by a transfer of guardianship to either Noah Courson or Dimas Porter; who then can marry respectively Miss Pollyanna Lipatel and Miss Yoko Lipatel. All three pacts require a witnessed signature from Master Puno Fiala Bartos, who here appears in the role of the girls' deceased father.

Noah thanks and continues:

"We will offer Master Puno Fiala Barto's contract to supply us with wood, and he will have shares in the factory, as well as the double buyback price of his guardianship over the misses Lipatel." - Noah lets a draft in three copies go around, while he points to the draft agreement and mentions that he and Dimas waive their claim on the Santu house and only ask for some small dowry amounts that Master Fiala Bartos must finance. - Noah sits down.

Relan Unusu is up again:

- A well-thought-out draft agreement. However, allow me to point out that the size of the dowry is determined by the Guardianship Act, and not by the parties. - After that, I give the floor to a diplomat who is known for being able to cut glass with his tongue. The floor is yours, Mr Envoy Avitla Stun, please! - Relan bows and winks at me, which causes my shoulders to slump into place, accompanied by the company's muted cheer.

"Thank you Mr Speaker! Ladies and Gentlemen!" Envoy Avitla Stun rises with a quick movement:

- In my years as a young attaché, I traveled around the world. Often on dangerous journeys and simple conditions. The much poverty I encountered settled in my heart. Like a flower that needed me to live. And I wish I could offer all poor young girls a life like the one I'm offering Miss Pollyanna, Miss Yoko and Miss Eutille. The girls get a life of luxury like no other. Chambermaids, waiters, travels, exciting food and many expensive beautiful dresses and jewellery. They learn new languages and customs, and live happily together with a man who rules a country bigger than the province here. And who is their lover and protector. Many other women will envy them. They do not have enough for the

day and the road and die in poverty and oblivion. Thank you, Master Fiala Bartos, for considering this wonderful opportunity for your girls! - Avitla Stun sits down and dabs his eyes and forehead with a piece of violet silk. Sandip Comar crosses his arms with a hand on each shoulder and bows.

After a moment of silence, Relan Unusu rises and thanks and declares "fermata", which I know from the Blue Hall means pause. I, Eutille, am a little heavy-headed and don't understand much of what is being said. The gentlemen stretch their legs and I have to fetch the tea which is ready. To make sure it's hot and strong enough, I lift the lid and scoop some of it up with a spoon. "Christmas Coming Tea" - mm, tastes nice of Christmas but is a little too strong for me. "Kashikoi On'na Tea" - I look around, take a few spoonfuls - tastes just right. Very comfortable! A lovely warmth spreads. Like licking the silver spoon after a wedding cake in wonderland. I sneak in to drink more with a cup that I stir. Yes, it is also warm and strong enough. Put on and onto the table.

Relan Unusu hands Avitla Stun a small bell and permission to ring a little with it. Mr Stun turns and turns it like you do with an item in a toy store, and chirps curtly and authoritatively with it:

"Was that good enough, Mr Unusu?" he smiles. The chairman signs well with his hand and gives the floor freely and sits down. You sit down. Yoko puts out bread and fried eggs and I bring bowls of fruit and chutney, Pollyanna brings cutlery and crockery, and a pot of almond coffee.

The men talk a little at cross-purposes. The atmosphere becomes a little more liberated. Pollyanna pours tea, but looks at Noah before each cup. - Noah smiles at me:

"Are you well, Eutille?" - I smile and nod slowly. I hear Master Bartos:

- That's what I call tea! Mr Porter, will you honor me with the red bowl of sweet fruits?

- With pleasure, Master Bartos, if you will grant me the blue bowl of freedom for the ladies.

- Here you are! The child scolds the umbrella when it rains, Mr Porter.

- If I were a child, I would probably choose another umbrella, Master Bartos. Bartos almost hums:

- I just want to help, everyone must be happy, including those who are looking for faults in the wallpaper.

I feel Pollyanna hug me and I think the table is a little crooked. "Drink some water!" she says. I drink a little and hear Mr Sandip Comar's voice:

"Now you, my honorable Director Elnó Trenson. It is said that you, one man, armed only with an adorned foil, stopped three armed robbers. Please tell me: is there a grain of truth somewhere in that story?" - Elnó Trenson smiles and takes a sip of tea:

- My Dear Precious Attaché, the truth gets up late, but gets the line first. A woman was in danger. So I merely offered the dexterous robbers my courteous help on the right path of life; whereupon they shouted "Uangu!" and ran into my foil.

"Really" says Comar. Trenson unbuttons his jacket:

- If you have the time one day, I will gladly show you a piece of the truth. You know the reality well already. While we're on the subject:

Where did you buy the beautiful white elephant? - Envoy Avitla Stun swings his teacup:

- The white hero elephant was given to my attaché for rescuing a princess and her entourage from a dangerous male elephant in must. - Goro, Puno Bartos and Dimas interfere:

"Tell, tell!" Comar leans back:

- Then I must gather courage and more tea. - Pollyanna comes over. Sandip Comar tells:

- Princess Pidi ...

"Princess Pilvith" it comes from Avitla Stun. Comar continues:

... was out in the park of the palace with her entourage. Suddenly they are faced with a large elephant. They can see it is in must. And that it is preparing an attack on the princess and her court ladies. Fortunately, the princess has a young attaché in her entourage.

"His name is Sandip Comar," interrupts Avitla Stun. Comar continues:

- I bring myself between the animal and the beautiful women. - The gentlemen clap and

shout bravo!

- Although unarmed, I have an advantage over the elephant. I have two more hands than it has. - Applause!

- The elephant trumpets and advances towards my person. I form a funnel with my hands and shout three times the daily price of a kg. ivory. Probably exaggerating a bit, it was somewhat lower. No reaction from the dangerous animal! - I now shout three times "Durio Zibethinus!" The elephant continues towards me unconcerned. - A sigh goes through the company. Mr Sandip passes the time by enjoying another mouthful of tea, and by polishing his white elephant with a piece of white silk; he leans forward:

- I must use my last chance carefully. Put my hands over my mouth and shout three times: Your full name: "CHIEF DIRECTOR ELNO TRENSON!" And the big animal blindly flees away through thick and thin - has not been seen since.

- Loud applause from the company, to which Elnó Trensón dryly remarks: "Thank you! I've really had this tickling feeling in my stomach every time you, Mr Attaché Sandip Comar, have saved a princess from an elephant. Perhaps I should consider a smaller tax there?" - Lots of fun and Trensón and Comar get up and greet each other.

But I guess I'm not myself. And now the table is just crooked and the air thick, I can see. I think Dima's head is wrong. And Yoko has a weird color. - Noah winks at me and nods to Pollyanna. She takes the magic teapot. And offers everyone more tea. But just before she pours, she looks at Noah. He shakes his head a little and she pours Christmas tea. One after the other gets "Christmas Coming Tea". But when she reaches Master Bartos, he nods curtly. And she pours "Kashikoi On'na Tea". Also by Envoy Avitla Stun, Noah nods and he also gets this "Kashikoi On'na Tea". Everyone seems to be enjoying their tea.

After some time Master Bartos half reclines with closed eyes:

"A lovely - ah - cow-riddled - oops - t - e". Mr Avitla Stun sweats and looks like a lost child. He looks around confused and points but can't really say anything. While Master Bartos, with an overturned teacup, tries to say something himself, but sinks strangely.

And the ceiling hangs far too low, I think. Noah nods to Pollyanna. A chord from her leiya. Stun jerk with one leg. Another chord, and Master Puno Fiala Bartos, in his own person, gets a little unsteady on his feet. He pulls up Avitla Stun in two attempts, with one: "*The best app-(plurp)-les hang the highest*"! Pollyanna sings and plays quiet, beautiful, slightly wistful tunes on her leiya. Honorable Messrs. Puno Fiala Bartos and Avitla Stun are now seen in mutual embrace, tears mixing with sweat on their cheeks.

Little dance steps seem to stave off one fall after another. I guess it doesn't work? The floor faces the wrong way. Yes, they can make a left turn. Avitla Stun tries a better balance with a firm grip on Elno Trenson. No luck. Avitla and Puno have really gone off course. You hear a sound like when a few sacks fall from a cart! And there they lie. In mutual embrace with open mouths and radiating glorious happiness. And many big faces look worriedly down at - me:

"Are you well Miss Eutille?"

"Anything to drink?"

"Did you hit you?"

"Do you want to sit down?"

And yes, I come up and sit, surrounded by great sympathy. Must have missed part of the negotiations. Yoko and Pollyanna compete to brush me and they put a blanket around me. Master Fiala Bartos stands holding several sheets of paper in each of his raised hands: - as I said: Mr Noah Courson, here I am with two building plans to consider:

In my left hand some sketches of a couple of furniture workshops with a small water mill. Nothing, with a little in the middle!

In my right hand I have my own construction plans: three large factories with a large dam over the Ubito River and a power plant on the same site. As well as a whole new city, yes two, for many, many skilled workers and their families. Opportunities to utilize the riches, skills and products that we have or can produce: precious crystal minerals,

perfume oils, highly prized cloth, expensive riding horses, beautiful precious wood, weapons, highly trained managers and middle managers, etc. Prosperity for the entire region!

Master Bartos throws all the papers into the air and leans forward with both hands on the table:

"You can't bait me with money; I'm the richest man in the province, Mr Transit Agent Noah Courson! Should I be baited into swindling my girls out of this unique opportunity that Honorable Envoy Avitla Stun is offering them? Do you think I'd let such a chance pass me by?"

- I am responsible for these three young ladies. If the court asks, "Who is the father of the Lipatel sisters?", I formally stand as their father. And with the law on my side, Mr Police Commissioner Dimas Porter. With-the-law-on-my-side. Just keep that in mind! - Master Bartos practically sings the last phrases, fencing in the air with his table fork, as if a baton.

Dimas Porter leans back with a smile, as when you have unexpected guests:

- Tableau! Very passionate, Master Bartos! Very passionate! Thanks! - Dimas holds a closed room with his hands: The animals in the zoo are also, with the law in hand, locked inside, and are better off than the animals outside. Much better, Master Bartos! Much better! Just keep that in mind! - The company claps noisily!

Envoy Avitla Stun puts his head thoughtfully in his hand:

- It would be beautiful if there was more understanding and cooperation here in this consecrated house and between our picturesque countries. But mistrust and prejudice often win over common sense and openness. - Ambassador Avitla stands up: Exaggerated rumors are being spread about how we live in our country and who we are. Much of this is written by people who have never even been to the countries they write about. Who do not speak our language or know our cultures, our beliefs and thoughts. They should thank

us for everything this world has from us.

Instead of teaching us, one should share our joy over the rich nature that has conceived us and which north, south, east, west is without equal. Contains the world's most beautiful mountains, purest rainforests, most fertile rivers, wildest predators, richest wildlife in all. But we also inherit valuable future opportunities with minerals, food, medicine, research, tourism, semi-finished products for the construction industry and, not least, cheap and skilled labour. And on top of that the most beautiful palaces, temples and memorials imaginable. We are brimming with an endlessly inspired, life-giving visual art and music, unique dance tradition. Yes, in all modesty we consider ourselves the most beautiful, smartest and kindest people on this planet.

I am not saying that poverty and injustice are a thing of the past with us. That there is no intolerance, abuse of power and dishonorable actions. That all is well and that time stands still! Hatred and strife exist all over the world where there are people, but hate and strife build no bridges and temples, and do not harvest corn, wine and rice. Hatred and discord divide poverty, sorrow and misery, not wealth and bonds of friendship. All countries have their problems and injustices. We also have ours. And we all need to learn to talk more openly about them. To dare to walk new paths to solve them. That is why we also stand here today with open hands.

But we must also know and respect our past and its traditions, they are part of us. And we can't run from them. We must honor the families that gave birth to us. But it is now people's condition to hold on to their past and tradition with one hand and to embrace the future and renewal with the other hand. Come and visit our country!

We are a hospitable and generous people!

Applause! Compliment!

Noah Courson is up and drying himself with his napkin:

- Thank you for your speech and for everything you stand for, "Ambassador" Avitla Stun;

very moving! You love your country. And you can probably understand that these three young ladies love this country. Our country. The pure deep rivers, life itself. The beautiful eucalyptus woods enveloped in light scarves of blue haze. Or the annual festive fireworks display of large blooming butterflies in search of honey and water: How poignantly beautiful! The high, steep Ubito Mountains with their many adventurous rock faces. At once funny and scary. The beautiful red macaw birds and our famous beautiful horses. Our tradition of poetry and music not least. I could go on, Mr Envoy Stun. All that you will, in the best sense of course, pack up and take from the ladies and replace it with pecuniary wealth and splendor. And put the ladies in a palace in a lovely country, but another country that comes too late to be theirs. Happiness does not come in a bag or a bottle. It is like these blue forest mists over jubilant human souls. My Honorable Envoy, You can take a person out of a country, but you cannot take a country out of a person.

Thanks!

We stand up and sing:

I could be speechless.

I could go blind.

But I will never forget

- you, my love!

Avitla Stun has been left standing:

"Very beautiful! Thank you! But Mr Courson, many young people will understand what I mean. They are longing for adventurous. You probably had that when you were young."

Noah Courson is absolutely amused:

- My dear Envoy Stun, I am five and a half years younger than you. -

Common hilarity!

We sit down and everyone greets everyone. Relan Unusu just needs to find himself before he turns against the company:

"The planned damming of the Ubito River is being asked. - According to Mrs Sikna

Pertino on the archives, You, Honorable Master Fiala Bartos, intend to flood 4 km of the Ubito Valley south of the Blue Hall, and turn it into a lake; and transform 2700 hectares of forest to bog. The many people who live in the valley or the forest must be rehoused in clearings northwest of Blue Hall. In long rows of small wooden houses."

Mr Goro Tamura gets the floor and stands up:

"Someone will turn off the stove and saddle their horses when hearing that message. But I say: Let's not take the optimism out of the message! And today we hear that bridges should be built. People have long wanted a bridge over the river. A dam can also act as a bridge. Yes, and valley people have always complained in times of drought. Soon they can just open their mouths, because they will live at the bottom of a lake." Widespread merriment! Mr Tamura continues:

- But if they don't want to, they can swim ashore and move into the mentioned small wooden houses. And with all the wealth we've heard about today, I wonder if not there is a maid given with every house? - Loud applause!

Tamura continues:

- And now we are at chambermaids and princesses. - He greets Envoy Stun, who returns his greeting. - Goro spreads his arms:
- I have also traveled the world small. As a procurator for a large estimated company, the Courson Company Limited, I often have to travel far or short. And I have met more poverty than money can buy. I consider myself a kind of compromise between rich and poor. I'm the nice guy who asks weird questions. It is a type that pleases people both by coming and going. I promise to do the same today. And have also done it in your country, Mr Envoy! I couldn't afford a white elephant, so I had to settle for a pistol bullet in the left shoulder blade. On the other hand, I still have ten toes Master Bartos and two ears Mr Porter. - Applause! Goro bows and thanks: A ball that changed my view of elephants and of corn. And not least on myself!

"How? Mr Goro Tamura?" it comes from the company.

- Yes, when I travel, I always go to the countryside to hear the opinion of the villagers. I then came to the region of Korimundo in the province of Belluktana. Visited there the small village of Portifus. Named after the city boy Mr Igno Portifus, the inventor of the fleeting smile. Unfortunately, the village was just plagued by wild elephants. So I offered my help. Became very popular for it.

- Early in the morning at four, it was still dark, the elephant alarm went off. A herd of hungry elephants, in a bad mood, was heading towards the farmers' crops. I love elephants, but what would my farmer friends do if their crops were eaten? The farmers took their weapons and lined up in front of their beloved cornfields. They swung torches, struck pots and pans and rang bells. I honked a horn. The elephants broke the chain at the weakest point and there was commotion, melee, gunpowder smoke! The farmers did not escape without loss! The elephants took what they wanted and left again. One of the elephants got me with his gun! "*J'espère, donc je vis!*".

Avitla Stun gets up:

"Long live Mr Goro Tamura and high powers protect him and his craft. You have my undivided admiration! Long live him!" The company rises:

"Hooray, hooray, hooray!" Everyone sits down.

Tamura bows deeply and long:

- Thank you Mr Envoy, and thank you Ladies and Gentlemen! My last questions are for you Mr Envoy Avitla Stun.

- call me: Avitla, Goro!

- Thank you Avitla! If your prince is offered 10 women, and chooses one of them as his partner and wife, what happens to the other 9 women?

Avitla Stun seems moved:

"With your permission Goro, I will let my attaché Mr Sandip Comar answer on my behalf. Thank you!" - Sandip Comar stands up, thanks and says:

- I can only speak about the maidens as diplomats, that is to say me and my able envoy, bring home. So one of our princes can get to know them; and possibly marry. The royal migration agreement stipulates that what you call the 9 other women, whom the prince does not take as a partner and wife, those women can choose whether they want to apply for work at the palace. Which is honorable but unpaid. Board and lodging! Or they may wish to return home where they came from. With diplomatic escort, of course. And at our expense. Back to their former guardian. - Comar sits down. Tamura points around with his fountain pen until he has the company's full attention:

- My honorable Mr Comar, can you confirm that a prince can assume and maintain more than 1 marriage contract at the same time?

- Honorable Procurator, my very best Mr Goro Tamura: We have no authority to comment or interpret the legal or familial affairs of a royal person.

We can only answer for documents that deal with the virgins in our care.

Goro looks around, having a hard time hiding his satisfaction. He leans forward towards Sandip Gomar and whispers passionately:

- and you didn't deny it, Mr Sandip Comar. If it hadn't been so clean here, I would have bowed in the dust for you. You are my favorite attache! Tamura straightens up and says:

- But Mr Comar, can you confirm that the royal migration agreement requires that the guardianship of the individual women be transferred to a male person in your country?

- Yes, that's how it goes.

- So can you also confirm that the wishes of such 9 women for work or repatriation must be approved by their new guardian?

- You have understood, Mr Tamura.

- And this new guardian for the women must be a royal person or other respected and wealthy person in your country? A person who could stand comparison with our revered Master Puno Fiala Bartos? - Goro Tamura greets Master Bartos and he greets back.

- Yes, you have again understood the content of it, Mr Tamura. says Comar: Such a person could be my honorable Envoy Mr Avitla Stun. - The company nods appreciatively.

Noah Courson folds his hands:

"Yes, and this new "owner" of the women can theoretically "sell" them on! Avitla Stun is up again:

- Precisely, theoretical theories, Gentlemen. But our offer to obtain an audience with several princes, with the possibility of marriage and wealth, is not theory but reality. -

Dimas Porter clears his throat:

- Yes, if the new guardian approves. - Trenson shakes his head:

- No, Mr Porter, the new guardian must also sign the royal migration document. In doing so, he has also approved the representation of the girls for named princes with a view to marriage. The girls even have the right to marry another prince of the family, if he so wishes - and on similar terms.

Avitla Stun:

- not only that. As mentioned, the document actually contains the "cat's hatch" that within the first year the woman has the right to regret and come back under her former guardian. And we have committed to paying expenses and reimbursement. - Tamura pokes his left index finger into his flat right hand:

- Sorry! But that presupposes that the former guardian wants to receive the women back under his protection.

- Yes, of course you can say that, Mr Tamura, it comes from a head shaking Comar.

Tamura bows and says:

- But if one of the ladies marries a prince, Goro points to his finger ring, the prince as husband takes over all responsibility and all obligations in a royal marriage contract with the woman, and voilà the "cat's hatch" slams in! - Goro claps his hands together and looks around, with a look as if he has just invented the rubber band. - Sandip Comar glances at the ceiling:

- My good and very amiable Tamura, nothing escapes your attention. But turning holy matrimony into a simple cat trap? - Tamura replicates:

- That's what you said, Mr Comar, and not me. - And now I hear Eutille's, that is, my own voice, say:

- Or puppet theater?

- Or a beautiful sailing ship? comes the smoothing from Dimas. He lifts his napkin, neatly folded like a sailing ship.

- Or a bird's nest with young? it comes poetically from Dir. Trenson.

- Quack quack! - says the moderator, and gives the floor back to Comar, and winks at me.

Comar raises his hand:

- But even if Mr Tamura is right again, it is a widespread misunderstanding that a guardian or husband, be it a prince, paternalistic can decide everything on the woman's behalf. He can't decide everything she has to think. He actually has a duty to listen to the woman and to try to understand her situation and points of view. Only then does he make the necessary decisions that a father in his place would have made. Avitla Stun:

- yes, anything else would be not only shameless but dishonorable. And that regardless of whether he is a guardian or a husband. - Relan Unusu looks around over the glasses:

- Thank you gentlemen! Rules may sound difficult. Formalities everyone can understand.

15. The Testimony

Dimas Porter throws out his arms:

- But we have, quite by chance, three such girls in our midst already. Why not allow them to speak for themselves, as a non-committal guide for us wise men? - To which Master Bartos retorts:

- The dogs bark, but the caravan continues. It is a blessing that women do not have to choose their own lives and futures, Mr Commissioner of Police. One day my girls will thank me for insisting that they deserve the happiness I will give them! - and Bartos grabs the table bell and rings a little with it.

Master Bartos now pulls out a yellow note which he shows his Director Elno Trenson. Trenson whispers something to Bartos, who shakes his head. They go aside and whisper

to each other. Pollyanna lip-reads them, and whispers to Noah what they say:

"What kind of paper is this Master Bartos?"

"The yellow one there?" Yes, I have saved it and thought ...

- Master Bartos, do you want to damage your own cause and credibility? Will you, with permission, shoot yourself in the foot? Now I have done my duty and made my objection.

- Elna, Elna, Elna! - I decide!

The two gentlemen come back and sit down. Bartos says to himself:

"I have spoken to myself. I have listened to myself. I have justified myself."

Trenson says to his cup: Saying no to oneself is difficult.

Bartos lifts the yellow note:

"Gentlemen, it is quite unnecessary asking the ladies! We have here my maidens' answer to Mr Envoy Avitla Stun's fantastic offer!" - Elna Trenson covers his face with both hands. An inaudible silence spreads. The note goes around. On it, undated, in handwriting:

We receive Mr Envoy Avitla Stun's offer
to meet the Ampundis Princes,
and willingly travels with him to Patnariburg.

Pollyanna Lipatel

Yoko Lipatel

Eutille Lipatel.

When the note reaches Dimas, he slowly takes out another and white note. The one he asked the three of us to write, and where all of us girls say no thanks to Envoy Avitla Stun's invitation.

"The yellow note, from Master Bartos here, is fake; while this white note is dated and with genuine signatures. We will pass them both around so that the Gentlemen can compare them," explains Dimas smiling.

Sandip Comar holds up the two notes:

- Were these the two you meant when you spoke of truth and reality, Mr Trenson? -

Trenson puts his teacup upside down:

- I could wish you were already sitting in our audit department, Mr Comar! - Comar forwards the notes. - Noah asks:

- Director Trenson, have you seen the yellow note before?

- Wish I had, Dear Mr Transit Agent, and I must not lie. The yellow note is like a bladeless knife without a handle. I know Miss Nono, sorry! Yoko Lipatel's beautiful signature from the accounts. - And Trenson looks questioningly at Master Bartos, who has just received the notes. Bartos tears up the yellow note and sends the white note back to Dimas Porter. Bartos puts the torn note in his mouth and chews it shaking his head.

Dimas shines like a sun.

Goro Tamura is up:

"Two births—one child! What do we have to fear? Let us hear it from the ladies themselves! Mr Unusu, beg you, thank you!"

Relan Unusu gets up and hits his cup:

- Which of the Gentlemen will vote to hear the matter from the ladies' own mouths? - Six gentlemen vote for. Master Puno Fiala Bartos votes against. Dir. Elno Trenson abstains voting.

Goro Tamura:

"The Misses Lipatel if I may ask!" Goro bows very deeply to us girls, then gives us three cheers from the company. Relan Unusu spreads his arms:

"Ladies, remember that this hearing is non-binding, even for you. You may change your mind. But you cannot decide what will happen. That rests with your guardian Master Puno Fiala Bartos."

Unusu continues:

- Miss Pollyanna Lipatel, do you wish to receive the invitation from Envoy Avitla Stun, about a possible wedding with a prince from a foreign land?

Pollyanna's dress has turned peach. She stands up with her hand on Noah Courson's shoulder, and says aloud:

- My answer is and will be: No thank you, Mr Envoy! In no way. - Noah and Pollyanna smile a little at each other.

Relan Unusu, now turns to Yoko:

- Miss Yoko Lipatel, do you wish to receive the invitation from envoy Avitla Stun, about a possible wedding with a prince from a foreign country?

Yoko stands up, kisses the gold cross and says boldly:

- My answer is also: No thank you! I don't want that. - Dimas claps and more follow his example. The company stirs and whispers.

And Relan Unusu asks for calm, and turns to me, Miss Eutille Lipatel. Yoko and Pollyanna try to wake me up a bit. I'm still not myself. He takes off his glasses and points them at me saying:

- And you, Miss Eutille Lipatel, do you wish to receive the invitation from Envoy Avitla Stun, about a possible wedding with a prince from a foreign country? - I try to get up, but prefer to sit. The room becomes completely silent. Everyone is looking at me. I'm afraid of saying something wrong. I think I understand what he means. Pointing and saying:

"I want to ride Pirallo!" Yoko whispers loudly:

- But, it's Chief Director Elno Trenson! And Trenson smiles worriedly:

- Every day has its surprises! - I look around with difficulty and point again:

"I want that Prince!" - Pollyanna writhes:

- Sorry! Sorry!

Relan Unusu laughs:

"Good, I am your Prince, Noble Princess!"

I try:

- *Thank you, You can, - can ride Zalto!* and I point to something that is alternately Zalto and Master Bartos. The company is shaken. And I get shaken and get cold water. And I point:

- *No, Zalto is too - slow, You can ride - on Benjamin!* - and the finger lands on Sandip Comar, who is amused and says:

- Beautiful Princess, I am fast, but I only have two legs.

- *Yes, Benjamin is the right choice*, I add.

"Eutille, Eutille!" shout Yoko and Pollyanna.

- I'll probably just have to get used to the thought, says my prince Relan, looking at Sandip Comar; - and I add:

- *My honorable Mr Prince, - we shall live in a tea - pot. We are moving - into a - teapot with two large - rooms and two children's - rooms.* The company now seems excited about my answers. I calm down a bit and hear them further and further away. I ride away with my prince!

16. The collapse

"Where am I? Where is my prince?" I shout, quickly getting to my feet. Pollyanna and Yoko are already sitting at the breakfast table. They come rushing:

- You are here, we are ourselves, Eutille! Good morning, how are you?

- Oddly tired. I'm dizzy crooked, I moan tearfully and sit down:

"Where is my prince!" I say inconsolably. - Yoko pulls me in close to her:

- You dreamed it all, little Tille!

I throw up! They manage it, and put me back to bed on the bench in the living room. With a glass of water on a chair. They finish eating and clean up in between. But mostly sitting with me. I get a banana and some more water. It's just what I need.

"Are you angry with me?" I say.

- Yes, Eutille, yesterday we were at first shocked, so angry, so despairing, says Yoko.

Pollyanna continues:

- Then we were scared and unhappy. But talking to Dimas and Noah afterwards helped.

By detours you may have strengthened our case, with your Kashikoi intoxication and your wild dream talk. That was their opinion. Yoko shakes her head:

- Elno said, that someone never comes back from it. Goro spoke of deaths. We have

thrown it away, Tille!

- But if that tea is so bad, why did you have it? They look at me. Pollyanna points down towards father's depot:

- The Santu house was part of a temple that was taken out of service and torn down. Here were all left behind, cases that were used in the temple service. Father had worked for them. Mom thought we weren't allowed to ...

- the house is not really ours, says Yoko, and stretches and yawns:

- Father and mother were allowed to live here, Eutille. But then they had to look after the house, and keep an eye on the santu stone and the whole place. Not doing anything themselves. But summon a bamro if it was necessary. A temple servant. - They move together and give me a big hug:

"We promised mom to take care of you!"

- That is, you know everything! I say crying. Yoko blows my hair:

- This will be talked about for years. About fake signatures, princes and horses.

Pollyanna laughs:

- And about my teapot as the icing on the cake. - I am hooting much and put my arms around Pollyanna:

"Sorry sorry, Pollyanna! I hate myself. I'm going to ruin everything! Now they're selling us all three." I cry and wipe my nose and turn around. Pulling the blanket up over me.

- Yes, maybe, says Yoko, but even if Master Bartos still has the power, Pollyanna completes the sentence:

- then the shine has gone off him.

Yoko and Pollyanna sit for a long time at the table. I lie down again and lie still and listen to them breathing. It seems calming - comforting. Then Yoko says softly to Pollyanna:

- This can happen suddenly. Pollyanna replies just as quietly:

- Or it could last years. They lean against each other and Yoko asks:

- Do you think they will keep waiting and waiting for us? - I mean keep loving us?

- Have you thought that too? says Pollyanna, casts a sidelong glance at me saying:

I sometimes fantasize about working at Noah's house with letters of credit and customs declarations on our goods. And it will be too late to drive me home. And he only has one bed. There are high seas, but Noah is a skilled sailor so we don't fall overboard. We moan words to each other. Words that don't exist, but mean a lot to us, says Pollyanna, pouting. Yoko blushes:

- I sometimes dream that Dimas and I ride together on Zalto. We ride as we were born. Towards the dunes in the north. Dimas lets go of the reins and takes me instead. Keeps where it's most convenient. He is a skilled rider. Zalto jumps into the surf and I think: now it's happening! Zalto lands in cascades of water and I'm right.

After a long pause, during which they wipe each other's eyes, Yoko asks very quietly:

- Have you ever considered giving up, Polly? - Another break.

- You mean full stop? says Pollyanna. - Yoko almost whispers:

"If Dimas can't have me, no one else shall have me."

- That's how I feel about Noah, comes from Pollyanna. They smile at each other and squeeze each other's hands as they nod. Yoko raises her voice a little:

- I have a little secret. A chest at the bottom of the large well. These are funds I have saved up over several years. They should have been a kind of pension for us. No one outside this room knows. But they are not enough to impress Master Bartos. Pollyanna, you could write a little letter to Noah and Dimas about it, and that we love them to the end. It can help them a bit when we are away and they have to take care of our ... "little butterfly". You must write in a code they will be able to decipher and understand.

- A "thank you for everything" letter? comes Pollyanna in a low voice.

- Yes, Polly!

- And do it, Yoko?

- Get it done, they whisper slowly to each other, and nod thoughtfully again. - Then they both turn their heads and look at me for a while. Catch each other's eyes again - and slowly shake their heads in resignation. Pollyanna whispers:

- Mom never gave up!

- You're right Polly! We can count and count, but life takes its own crooked paths

regardless of what we believe. It can give us a little hope. We also never experienced dad giving up.

- Yoko! We must fight to the end.

- Yes, Polly. They can take our bodies but not our hearts.

"What is it you want to do over and put an end to? And why do you want to write a secret letter to Noah and Dimas? Is it me being not allowed to read it?" I sit up confused. Yoko sits down with me and brushes my hair away from my face:

- Eutille, you mean more to us than you think. We love you! If we didn't have you, we would...

- find it difficult to live on, Eutille, Pollyanna completes. And Yoko says:

- But you live, Eutille. There will be no secret letter. There is no - full stop. Pollyanna also sits down next to me:

- And we have each other. - All three of us sit and hold each other.

"And you neither want to escape up to the dunes with Dimas?" I sniff through tears. Yoko shakes her head and dabs at my eyes.

- No, says Pollyanna, and presses herself against me: Yoko stays here, no one escapes anywhere.

- So, how? What should we do? I cry. Yoko pats me on the head:

- We have done our part, and you have been a great help, Eutille!

Pollyanna sighs:

"Yes, and there is nothing more for us to do now. And Noah and Dimas, and their people, have done everything they could. And more. Yoko adds:

- We can only hope and wait, and wait and hope. Pollyanna says:

- Weather and wind change, but sisters are sisters. If they take us, we must stick together as long as we can! - Then I say:

"Yoko! What did you say just now?"

- that we can only hope and wait, right? - Then I sit up with a jerk:

- We can also wish! You're sitting right now, fingering mom's ... "golden cross!" say all three of us.

But the workshop is busy, so Pollyanna and Yoko have to get started. But we decide that each of us will think about what we want. After all, we have two life wishes left. And after lunch we clear the table and put the gold cross on the table. And then we sit and hold our hands on top of the cross. Yoko's voice trembles:

"Let's be quiet for a while and think about Mom and Dad!" A little later I say:

- if only father had lived, he would never have given us to old men whom we did not understand.

- You are right, Eutille, says Pollyanna. Imagine if dad was with us!

But Yoko shouts:

"Are you really out of mind? Are you madly crazy? You've just spent the last two wishes! And on wishing for something we can never have - the past! For something we know will never happen. We can't turn back time. We all three have thrown away our wishes. All is lost!" Yoko runs onto her bed and sobs loudly.

Pollyanna also cries and cries:

"Forgive us Yoko! we didn't know." - She stands in despair and squeeze the cross shouting:

- Yoko, we didn't know! - And I run crying to Nawaaf, but he is not at home. Then I run out and around the house, up to the stone, into the woods. Nawaaf is somewhere out there and:

"it's all my fault!" I keep shouting. I run, cry and shout.

After some time I don't cry, I run and shout. And when I get hoarse from yelling, I just run. And when I get tired of running, I walk. And I leave my head empty. Very empty. Time and space are one for me. I no longer know anything about where I am. But at least I'm somewhere in the forest that I don't know and that doesn't know me. A place I didn't know existed. Hear some shouts far away. Something like: "TEL! TEL!" - becomes weaker and disappears. I sit down on a large cold stone and snuffle. It feels right to sit here. I pat the stone and hear voices somewhere nearby. Behind me is a dense thicket, I

pull into it just as quietly and cover myself with leaves and twigs. It feels nice to lie there.
A lovely fragrance.

Scent of woods.

Woods.

The voices are getting closer and it's too late to run away. There are actually three men. One is dressed as Master Bartos. The one is Master Puno Fiala Bartos with Trenson's bucket hat! The other two are in dark grey overalls and have nothing on their heads. One of the two has an extinguished lantern light. The other is slightly smaller, and holds a long test drill wrapped in a cloth. They stand a little way from me and talk about cubic meters of casino wood. "Nothing we can get everywhere!" say the two men. They talk about delivery times, about factories. Master Bartos mentions a wrong accident - explains that "the accident is due to a mistake in another accident". And then they talk about something that you should never ever do.

Suddenly it is in front of me. A few feet from my face. A black dog larger and heavier than a human and with eerie red eyes. The fur is long-haired and bristly. No! It's not a dog. It is really bigger. It has a large head with standing ears that turn more outward than up. And canines like my little finger, blue tongue and a big wet, black nose that is constantly working to answer the question: "so what do we have here?" - It has broad shoulders - an enormous front and low muscular legs ending in large bear-like paws with frighteningly large claws. All in all, a mixture of hyena and black bear.

Master Bartos says:

"I'll have a talk with Trenson, but I promise nothing, I promise. I'll just talk to him. We talk together. We do that often." - They start to walk away from me. And I'm not sure if it's good or bad news for me? Is it actually terribly bad? Isn't that their animal? Does it belong in the woods? I don't think I've ever been more scared. Begins to push myself backwards into the thicket, which suddenly seems very thin and open. The animal follows with a big sniff. Maybe I should scream I think! Or maybe that's exactly what you should

never ever do! I feel something in my right trouser pocket. And immediately I know what it is: a transformation ball! My last of two. I send Trenson a big kiss in my mind, and bring the ball forward. It is big white and a bit dirty.

And now something happens. The animal sits up, looks around, and starts smacking. And now I see to my horror how big it is! How terrifyingly large is its gape! I lift the ball as if it were a referee's whistle and, as the animal looks at me, I throw the ball between its front legs. A small throw that I praise myself for. It looks sideways down at the ball. Sniffs it, pushes it. Picks it up and turns searchingly. Then the creature begins to dig. I see the thick short tail moving up and down as it digs and sprinkles me with wood leaves and soil. What powers!

Shaking, I get up and back away from the thicket. Backwards away. I turn and break into a fast walking race. - Looking back: The animal is gone! Completely gone? I continue walking. My head is empty. I can hear my heart beating! I feel hot and red. What would Pollyanna have done? She wanted to whistle I think. The whistle she learned from father before he left with his latest furniture collections. For the big annual fairs in Abuda and Talmato. Before we waved goodbye to father and to the ship "Lamenton", which has never been seen since. When Pollyanna is sad. When it happens, if it happens. She usually says to the mirror:

"The sea of the sea owes us a father! Our father! A child must have ..." But this does not comfort her. On the contrary.

- What shall the sea answer to that, Pollyanna? And if the sea has an answer? Perhaps we would prefer the uncertainty then, Pollyanna? The dreams? The dreams of mother and father, as Yoko often says? - That's how I'll try to comfort her next time. Little sister wants to comfort older sister!

I whistle but it sounds more like something leaking. When dad wanted to whistle, he liked to tilt his head slightly. Squinted the right eye slightly and raised the left eyebrow. I try everything but only get regular whistling sounds. Something with a congenital tooth

position, says Yoko. Oh, Pollyanna why wouldn't you teach me? Why wasn't I allowed to blow the silver flute?

And why did I ruin it all? What did I do wrong? Was it the tea? Did I get a prince? If I just had someone to talk to. Yes, if only I wasn't so stupid and alone. I look back and around a lot. No, the animal is gone, and I stop for a moment. Where am I? Pollyanna says the trees have more green algae on the shady side of their trunks. That the leaves of many plants face the sunny side. I'm trying to go east. And I try to whistle. And I want to cry, but I'm probably too old to cry now and too young to whistle.

I go on and on endlessly. The further I go, the calmer I become. I want to go home - confess that everything was my fault and help to ... well, do what they say. I'm in my secret places way too much. In the cave, by the stone, by the bao tree. I want to be as skilled as Yoko and Pollyanna are. Maybe then we will get along again? I stop, and from my mouth sounds the most beautiful whistle imaginable. And again! and once again! The silver flute! It is not particularly strong. - but penetrates everywhere: through doors, under the skin, into the body.

"Pollyanna!" I shout

"Listen, I can, I ...," but I'm alone. I break into a trot. I stand still and listen: can hear a horse-drawn carriage somewhere to the right. Our house must face east. I continue as I shout:

"NAWAAF, NAWAAF, ARE YOU THERE?"

17. I'm growing up

Suddenly I feel strong. Now it's my turn to help, comfort, read, learn and to build, buy and sell. And to betroth me! I continue running for a while. Speeding up and up. I am my own Pirallo now. I blow through the woods. I'm free! I'm an adult!

After some time the forest becomes thinner and lighter. Cherry trees! I can make out the

Santu stone.

"Eutille!" - someone is calling my name! And a little later I am facing a girl or lady in flat shoes, smooth grey trousers and the red Santu shirt. She is smart! How beautiful she is! A friendly steady look with a twinkle in the eye. Auburn dark hair! (Feel like stroking it.) It is caught at the back in an elegant ponytail with a bright green buckle. Her voice is round and authoritative. A little on the deep side:

- And you are Miss Eutille? she nods and smiles with her chin slightly lifted. Maybe to appear bigger? We are actually the same height!

- Yes, I'm Eutille. - She comes right up to me, smells a bit of jasmine, Shows me something with a picture and name: "CID Officer, Junita Dinkelfield!"

- It's probably easiest if I call you "Eutille" and you can call me: "Jun"?

- That's fine with me, I bob. - There are police everywhere, including inside our house.

"Jun has her!" being called out by someone. I can't see Pollyanna. Yoko is sitting at the table talking to a male cop, and another female officer, Daisy. And with Relan Unusu, who writes quickly on a narrow pad:

"Thanks for last!" he says and gives me a bow and a small hand kiss keeping my hand:

"Sorry for making you a prince!" I make my most courteous drop.

Relan Unusu grants me a big smile:

- You were unforgettably brilliant, Miss Eutille Princess! As a child, my greatest wish was to become a prince, but my father did not think that my health would allow me to ride around upon foreign diplomats that much. Since then, however, I have come to doubt whether he was right. My mother thinks I should follow my heart. But I can't. Because it was gone when I got home from here. It is red and shaped like a teapot. And if you find it here, I would be deeply grateful if you would keep it to yourself, Miss Eutille. Then I know it won't go away again. Officer Daisy laughs boldly:

"How sweet of you! Your father must have known all about the matter, he is a diplomat himself. But mothers do have more sense about teapots."

Now Relan and I hold each other with both hands. I pluck up the courage and look him

straight in the eyes with my head slightly tilted:

"Mr Relan Unusu, I also stayed away. The forest is so big and time is so long. And I was an adult when I came home. And as an adult I will stand by my deeds. That's why I now stand by what I told you at the meeting!" My prince takes a breath and tries in vain to say something. We just nod thoughtfully, still looking deeply into each other's eyes. A small lock of bangs falls towards my right eye. I leave it alone. He swipes it away slowly. Now we are very close to each other. Finally, my prince succeeds. He says clearly and distinctly:

"Miss Eutille, you have my word! You already have my heart."

There is complete silence around the table. Everyone is looking at us and at each other with big wet eyes. Jun eases me over to Yoko. We sit close together for a bit. Yoko whispers in my ear:

- Eutille, you have just promised yourself away in the presence of witnesses! - I whisper to Yoko:

- Thanks, Yoko! You are my witness.

A little later I whisper:

"Yoko, where's Pollyanna?" - Yoko whispers close to my ear:

- We've all wasted our wishes, but it was me who started it! And my fault that Polly is gone! - I hug Yoko and say consolingly:

- No, it's my fault she's gone! It's all my fault. We only have each other, and must stand together now. Help the police all we can. - Yoko nods:

- The track is hot, they say. I have told them what Polly was wearing and that she was wearing mother's cross.

"Where is she?" I ask, "where's Pollyanna?"

- She wanted to find you, but didn't come back, says Yoko. And I couldn't find any of you. You were gone. I didn't sleep the night. When it became light I looked again in the forest. It was completely silent. Went home and hit 9 + 2 on the Bao tree.

I look around:

- But she'll be home soon, right? - Jun shakes her head:
- No, your sister has been abducted, Eutille. Do you know this one?
- Yes, I say, those are Pollyanna's shoes. - Jun puts it down in a bag:
- We found it in the forest. We used dogs. - I stand up:
- Jun, listen, I'll do whatever you say, as long as we find her.
- Thank you, says Jun. You are also part of our plan. You know Pollyanna. Her voice, her clothes, everything around her. Can you fit one of these Santu jerseys?

- It dresses you, says Yoko, and wipes her eyes and nose:
- They want me to stay here, Eutille. I have to be questioned. But my thoughts are with you - in you. The same blood flows in our veins. We must never lose hope, Eutille!
Never! Yoko takes our new letter knife and whispers:
"We'll take Polly back. Catch those who did it. I've promised Polly—but they're watching me all the time, Eutille. Just fetching a flower, they'll go along."
- Well Yoko, they look after you. You must not make it difficult for them.
- Eutille! I had completely forgotten that I was going to town. Soma came and asked for Yoko. He was immediately surrounded and taken in for questioning.
- He probably understands that, Yoko. We have many friends.
- It has to be seen who we can now trust. What substance who is made of, Eutille. - I completely forget you are a child. How big you have grown!

I kiss Yoko's cheek and sit down with Jun and Relan Unusu. He says:
- Can I also say "you" and "Eutille" if I become "you" and "Relan?" - I stand up in a slow twist and say:
- Thank you, Relan! and sits down again. Relan continues:
- You have been in the forest since yesterday morning. Tell us everything you've seen!
- Before I turned around I saw three ... I start, but just take a sip from a glass that Yoko gave me. And reaches into my pocket for my handkerchief, and there it is - Trenson's transformation ball!

- Let me think about it, I say, surprised and confused.
- Take your time! Jun smiles. Then I say:
- I heard a horse carriage driving west not long before I met you, Jun. Jun moves closer:
- It has been one of ours.
- Otherwise I was alone the whole trip, I say a little confused.
- Do you remember other episodes in the past, that you would like to tell us about? Jun says. - I look at Yoko and she nods. I embrace her and whisper:
- And the traps?
- Yes, everything, Yoko whispers. - And I do: my walk with Pollyanna from the Blue Hall, where Pollyanna was stopped by two men. How they were dressed, what they did and said, and where it happened. About the macaw birds and the silver flute. Also the conversation I heard behind the wall, about the traps with hares. And about where I was yesterday and today. I tell everything. Or almost everything.
- Good, says Jun, now we have it from you too. - Relan looks up:
- You can stay here when we're done, Miss Yoko Lipatel, or we can drive you to Setorium, where you can be close to us. In both cases, we have you under our wings. Jun turns to me:
- Your "prince" will follow us as soon as he finishes here, Eutille!

18. The hunt

- "Where is Dimas?" I ask?
- The police commissioner is working in the field now, says Jun, and so must the two of us. Because we are busy.
- "Can you ride?" She takes me down to the road. Some men examine the road, which is blocked to the west. A pair of horses wait by a heart tree.
- "Black or white?" says Officer Jun Dinkelfield. Something about her tells me she's good at getting her way.
- I'll take the white one if I have to, I say.
- Guess what I'm going to take, she says, and hopscotch she sits nicely parked in the

saddle of the black one. She pats it and says: - mine is called "Chance".

- Follow me! We take the smaller roads and paths so as not to slow down the police's work.

- I'm ready, I say, and off we go. Jun brings a net with various things, including a few cans with Santu's brand on them. The halter on my white horse bears the name: "Ludwig". We let them walk across the meadow and into the woods. On the first stretch there are no paths, but good ground that carries well. Jun seems to know the forest. We hit a dirt road riding side by side.

"The other officers call you Jun too?"

- That's my name.

- But...

- Most people don't know that my name was Junita in my home country.

- That is a beautiful name.

- Thank you! You are beautiful too! We both laugh, and ride through a piece of tall woods of quite large, very old trees. They open here and there in clearings. Beautiful views over fields and meadows, with the mountains as a backdrop. But it is not easy with the huge tree roots Ludwig and I must admit:

"But Jun, now we know why a horse has four legs."

- Yay, you're smart too, my girl! - When I came here, I applied for the service. But was very doubtful. Two female officers from Dept. N. took me on a horse ride. Wanted to show me some of what I could expect to be put on. We rode in the Ubito Forest. Get here through this wonderland. Ouched me good! Decided the case.

We ride on and I visualize it all as I ride. Is as if Jun and Chance together are a third being. And thinking, that's how I want to learn to ride too.

"You are a fine rider, Jun!"

- Eutille, my heart comes from Kolokimberley. My grandfather taught me to ride different grounds. I was proud of him. He was Stable Dock Master. When he entered a fold or paddock, the horses followed him wherever he went. If a horse were not respected by

guest riders or trainees, he could shout: "Beat your horse, feel good and strong. Soon your head, the woods belong." Cost him the job in the end.

"Didn't you have any siblings?" And I pull up on her left side.

- Yes, brothers. And they trained me in pigana from the time I was little. So I could defend myself. For a long time I thought that was how you played together.

"Was it very dangerous where you lived?"

- We didn't think so ourselves. As we didn't know anything else, you know. My oldest brother Iggi taught me to shoot. I was only twelve years old. And I was little better than "capable," he said.

"Do you have a gun, Jun?"

- Service pistol? I have my Crantock 9. Fits well in the hand, but beats a lot. I've gotten used to it. And get good grades on the field. Make me feel safe. But I shall not wear it today, Eutille. - Jun tracks Chance a bit. Ludwig and I follow her.

"Why did you have to learn to shoot, Jun?" Jun shrugs:

- Iggi said to me: "One day you will need everything I have taught you". And one day he was suddenly right! It was a day with beautiful skies and changing winds. I was alone at home with my cousin Yola. We had so much fun together. Invented funny words and sounds and made small dishes for each other. Yola told how she had found a baby baboon in their well. She called it Flobby and taught it to play hide and seek, which all animals should learn. And Yola's mother, Rutuba, had sewn a set of clothes for Flobby and ... it suddenly jolted Yola. - She jumped up! Pointed and whispered, "*Kifo cha njano!*" - I didn't see any lions. But immediately went in and took our large doublet, and saw that it was loaded in both chambers. Cocked the doublet. Went out to Yola, and disengaged the safe.

We stood there in the open door, and the lion came forward in the yard opposite us: "Well done Yola!" It came calmly towards us, as if it owned the farm. The distance was below the critical 100 feet - Oopsy, not your fault, Iggi! Told Yola to hold the door ready, it opened outwards. I had to expose me a little to feel the wind and get the best position. Took three steps forward to the right and took aim. The lion, a lioness, stopped. Turned

left and right. Wanted to read and understand the situation. But I aimed at her third rib and exhaled slowly with a gentle quick draw. The way I had learned. And here came mistake number two. Yola whispered: wait! I held back my shot. The lion pulled herself down with tensed muscles. The tail went on it. "Watch out, she jumps! Shoot!" it came from Yola. The lion looked straight at me. Its left eye was a water eye. White and empty! I whispered, "nimi no, Yola!" and put my shot in the gravel in front of the lion. The dust settled. It was gone!

"But Jun, how? Why didn't you shoot it?" I exclaim. Yola asked that too, says Jun with her head tilted:

- I once saw my uncle beat my mother. He also had such an eye.

"But Jun, what did you do? If someone hit my mother ..."

- What could little Jun do? That was bad, Eutille. I screamed and ran between. Then I also got my share, and I was proud of that, Eutille.

- But my mother taught me to carry the burdens on top of my head, not inside it. - Jun takes a water bottle from the net: there it is, all alone on her head, as she rides on. Straight back and rolling eyes:

"Sikio, jicho, ko kote tuendako!"

- Jun, you make me think of my father. He stood on one leg as he juggled mother's three fine Amelia cups. We held our breath until he finished and bowed. We have rarely laughed so much. Even mother laughed, stood on one leg, and kissed him:

"My naughty Lucas!" - We thought otherwise she would be furious.

- But Jun, do you think I can learn to ride with something on my head?

- We can quickly get an answer to that, Eutille. She says: grab! and throws the bottle over to me. I grab it and Jun claps:

- You grabbed it. Good, so you can learn it. Took me a year. - I throw it back to Jun, who laughs:

- And mother also taught me to play cards. But never about money. Although we could have used them. Jun thoughtfully lifts a low branch over her head as we ride on: I miss

her! She, she...

- Did your father play cards too, Jun?

- Don't know, never met my father.

- but Jun, is your father - dead?

- yes - in a way.

Jun tells me what awaits us and what is expected of us:

- We have clues from what looks like two men where your sister's shoe were found. The one man weighs about 70 kg and is 190 cm tall, and walks with steps of about 80 cm. He wears leather boots from the brand "All Over". Tall and thin. The other weighs 90 kg, is 170 cm tall and wears rather worn shoes. Where the left shoe is missing a small piece of the heel. The last man walks with steps of about 55 cm. He is - a heavy person.

"But Jun, how do you officers figure all that out?" Jun laughs, but suddenly becomes serious:

- Eutille, the eye shows what you see, the thought sees the hidden. She continues with open arms:

- Did the two men know what you did? Did they hear Pollyanna calling you in the woods? They have come running towards your sister from two sides. And she has torn some grey hair from the one. Lost one of her shoes during the match. And we also found some pieces of rope at the site. Recently cut. The men have bound your sister, and carried her down to the road by a different route than they came. Their carriage has been waiting there. A two-wheeled dogcart. Track width 130 cm. Drawn by a slightly limping horse on fairly new shoes. There is not much space in such a carriage. It has been running fast. Stopped, drove again. So we guess there was no third man. Your sister must have been difficult to control. We think she has been drugged with a blue cloth. As we found close to the place where you turn south in the forest. We are investigating the cloth.

The dogcart is not common here in the region. We could trace it to the forest town: Goangnu Village. The wagon has been on a trip in the west of the city, where it is

difficult to read the tracks. From there it has been driven further south. We'll probably find it. But we believe that your sister has been dropped off in the city, where she is easy to hide. - Our people have trained like this many times. They just as quietly put an invisible ring around the city. No one comes in or out of it without us knowing. We also have civilian officers inside the town. But if your sister Pollyanna is somewhere here, we need to find her fast before the trail goes cold! And that's where you and I come in, Eutille. Although our people are hidden, they can signal to each other in different ways, and to us. What one knows, everyone knows. And they are waiting for us. There are many large and small houses, so it takes time. You and I will try to tell them where "you are getting hot".

But the two of us are helped by our very best dog handler. His name is Gaston - and something I can't pronounce. Gaston is actually retired, but is very happy to come if we ask. Gaston has a half-length beard and often wears long worn coats with pockets, a soft hat and worn-out shoes. He does not use the usual dogs, but a small rare breed. Short-haired sandy brown, with a black, pointed muzzle, and almost black bat ears. It never barks, but is really good at tracking things and people. The breed is discreet and easy to transport. Is almost a pocket dog. - His favorite dog is called Cairo. It has won many prizes in the corps' annual dog tests. He gives Cairo scent about the subject or person and it starts searching with an expression like: I never find it. But it does so anyway. Stop! Sits up straight in squirrel pose and waves right paw. While Cairo clearly smiles and licks its mouth. It doesn't care about your sister at all - it only cares about the reward.

When we meet Gaston, we'll be rattling the cans. And he will find a coin and give it to me. But in the same movement he gets your sister's shoes from me - without anyone noticing. He then looks for another coin for you but drops it and picks it up. And at the same time, little Cairo gets the opportunity to sniff his hand, which hides the shoe. And Gaston gets the opportunity to unleash the dog unseen. - The shoe must be used to give Cairo search scent so that it can find clues to Pollyanna. Then he places the coin in your

tin, and in the same movement you must receive the shoe under the tin, make your bob, and turning away. Hide the shoe on you without looking down or back at Gaston. - And we move on calmly.

Jun and I also ride calmly on, and after a while she says:

- Eutille, we can see the city soon. We carry the small money boxes with the Santu brand on them. We must pretend to be Santu girls collecting for a Santu hostel at the harbor in the town of Avantis. A hostel for sailors. Say as little as possible, but use your eyes well, Eutille!

- Dear Jun, you can count on me! I'm all for it.

We can now see individual houses and hear voices and noise from tools. We pet our horses, saddle them down and tether them in the shade. Sharing some fruit. Drinking the water that Jun has brought. Then we check each other and Jun puts on a Santu hat. I have nothing on my head. We each hold a can and nothing else. Jun picks up a withered branch, approx. an inch thick. Breaks it into two pieces. Two wooden sticks, about 10 inches long. She swings one in front of me:

"That's my baton if we were to meet an orchestra." We both have fun. - You may laugh at me, Eutille. But do it now, not while we're at it! She hides them on herself.

We enter the northern end of the city and stand by the road that runs through the entire city. We are in Goangnu Village!

The town is a little lower than where we stand. It is surrounded by woods with large beautiful pinea pine trees. And in the middle of the city, three of them have been preserved. They all stand out nicely against the bright low houses. Someone bricked others in wood. Then it's all or nothing! It's now I must do all I can for my beloved Pollyanna!

A couple of children are playing by a house. Farther away, a saw is now and then heard. A dog barks a third place. Jun laughs as if we are talking about our collection, but she

says:

"Eutille, it may happen that I suddenly pull you down so that people cannot see us."

- Good, I say, that's fine with me. - We go down a side road: Carpenter Road. First house, no one home. Second house, quite large ladino dog. It comes rushing out and circles us.

Do, growl and show teeth!

"Shouldn't we just move on to the next house, Jun?"

- Keep calm behind me and look sideways, Eutille! Dogs can be ordinary family dogs. Or they can be good markers of secrets. We are definitely going in there! She takes out one of her wooden sticks and rolls it between her hands. Holds it high and says to the Ladino:

"Went for a walk in the wolf forest,

found a tail which was nice.

Is a little wilted there at the top.

Just take it if it's yours!"

Jun squats down. The dog now has nothing on his mind but Jun's wooden stick. It sniffs it. Takes the stick and struts proudly into the garden and disappears.

- That's it now, says Jun! In and up to the front door with the name Aalders. We ring the bell. A rather large plump man with an apron and a beer in his hand looks down at us searchingly with narrow eyes. Shouting into the house:

"WHERE IS REX?" We shake our cans a little. The man wipes his mouth:

"No begging here! They're everywhere." But Jun unfolds her charm:

- A hostel in Avantis. A sanctuary for sailors far from home! She says, with her hand on her side and a little chic hip sway on "Avantis". She adds: How nice you live here with your family, Mr Aalders! And the children can play with Rex in the garden or swing in the swing. The man relaxes completely:

- Of course, that's clear! He collects quite a nice amount. Slowly putting it into my tin as he smiles and nods at Jun.

We move on. House number five - the door opens. An older gentleman in clogs and a

black housecoat:

"Yes, I would like to!" He goes in and messes around a bit. Comes back with a coin for Jun's can.

- How crazy, you have to..., he says and picks up a coin for my tin. Jun tries:

"Thank you very much, and say hello to your wife." The man smiles:

- Now I live alone.

We go on house after house, all the way down and Jun says:

- Now everyone is in place in the city and around it. They await what our colleagues and the two of us track down.

Suddenly something new happens: at the opposite end of the city, right out towards the edge of the wood, I can see some macaw birds. They swarm over some houses close to the forest.

"Jun," I say,

- Pollyanna may have whistled the red birds up, I point. Jun studies her map of the city and signals with her hat. Small movements. And a little later:

- Good Eutille, they are in on it, we'll try that. We have until it gets dark! - We are going down towards the place. Meets two wives with baskets, and greets. One gives us a few coins. - When we reach the area, the birds are gone. But there is actually a single macaw sitting on one of the houses. The road is a narrow gravel road: Blackbird Path.

We wait a bit while a lady in red walks past us without saying hello. And down towards the house with the bird. Now there are two macaw birds, one on the house and one on a tree in the garden. Jun says to herself:

- It's one of ours. Must secure neighboring house and garden. - The lady goes down to the neighboring house without looking around. Knocks, shows the wife in the house something, and disappears in there.

Then we turn down the Blackbird Path and go towards the house where the macaw sits. It's number 7. A tall handsome man outside the house greets us and we wave back. He is

wearing light blue sports shoes, a knitted long sleeve jumper in white and brown, blue work trousers with a pair of garden gloves sticking out. He wears a cap with the shade down his nape, and works in the garden with a heavy drainage spade. We go up to the front door. Jun has her head tilted and squints a little at the man with the spade - and she and I nod a little at each other. I feel strong when we are together.

House and garden seem well maintained. The garden with perennial beds and a couple of large apple trees, and a wooden shed at the back. The plot is located next to the forest. Two pots of purple sun hat, purple ironwort and digitalis by the front door. It is newly painted greenish-yellow, goes well with the red bricks. The white nameplate reads "Benedict" in elaborate black mongolia type. Jun knocks:

"and say nothing, Eutille!" Some time passes and then - nothing happens. Jun knocks again:

- But use your eyes well, that's why you have them!

The door slowly opens. A small voice says:

"Oh, how nice," and in front of us stands a little lady close to 80. Beautifully dressed in nice little brown shoes, a pleated dark grey skirt and a nice yellow mohair wool sweater, as well as a grey checkered vest. She wears a pair of thin gold rings and a nice silver bracelet.

"Who is it, Grit?" says another small voice from inside the house.

"It's some nice Santu girls who collect." Grit shouts, smiling at us. Grit asks:

- Are you coming from far?

- We are on holiday here. It is so beautiful here! says Jun, and smiles widely. Grit turns:

- In the green dresser, Kara!

- I've looked there, says Kara. Grit smiles apologetically and walks into the living room. - Jun briefly points to some large boots hanging in a shoe niche in the entrance room, and nods:

"All Over". She puts a finger to her mouth. And now both Grit and Kara come out to us with some coins. Kara is also close to 80. She is in a floral patterned lace dress with a fine

green leather belt. She has done hair and fixed whites - there! around the neck hangs a cross in gold with a gold chain. I'm about to pass out. Jun squeezes my arm a little, smiles at Grit and Kara:

- How you two fit together beautifully, how cute you are! - Grit and Kara are flattered when we say goodbye, and thank you very much!

"Yoko has told us how Pollyanna was dressed. And that she wore your mother's gold cross and chain around her neck," says Jun, waving her hat a little. We are now standing in front of the Benedict house, facing each other. The garden man with the spade comes a little closer:

"If I were you, I'd collect in a completely different place. There are a lot of stray dogs here, and they don't like strangers!"

- Thank you, you are absolutely right. One can't be careful enough. And thank you for your attention! Jun says to the man. She continues:

- Here comes a man with a strange dog. If we can get some money from him, we'll stop for today. Thank you for your good advice! - The man with the spade digs on, shaking his head, but scowl a little towards us now and then. While we stand here, we then turn our side to the garden. The macaws are gone.

- Blow your whistle, Eutille, but don't look into the garden! Jun says. I whistle the silver flute softly. No answer. I whistle a little louder - no answer. I'm about to whistle the third time, but there comes a faint whistle, yes more! The silver whistle comes from somewhere in the garden, and now three red macaws land. Jun straightens her hat a little:

- We must have several indications that say the same thing before we get green light. But this house is probably getting more and more interesting.

And the man with the dog comes closer. It is, Gaston! And the very little Cairo walks nicely by his side in a dainty leather strap. Now the garden man is leaning suspiciously on his spade and watching us. My heart is pounding and my hands are wet with sweat. I get a strong urge to run away. But then a voice appears inside me. Yoko's voice whispers, "- take Polly back! - Polly back!" Suddenly all my fears are blown away. I am ice-cold in a

fire of thoughts. Lipatel! I am Eutille Lipatel!

We drop Mr Gaston our best curtsies and shake our cans a little. He tilt his hat and looks for a coin: "Here, Ladies!" and puts it in Jun's can. After that, everything goes completely as predicted by Jun. And suddenly I'm standing with Pollyanna's shoe and hiding it on my stomach. And Cairo runs into the garden, into Blackbird Path number 7, from side to side. And the nice garden man curses the strange dog and tries to mauls it with his heavy unwieldy spade.

"Cela ira, he's trained for this," Gaston smiles. - For him it is ordinary training and play. Ecco! There came the mark on the shed, he whispers, and calls Cairo home as for praise and reward: "Ici, ici!". And he and Jun apologize, taking off and straighten their hats. Gaston and Cairo calmly continue north without looking back, and Jun and I go too. But when we pass the neighboring garden, she suddenly whispers:

"Down!" and pulls me in behind some bushes:

"Your Pollyanna is in that shed, we must believe. We'll know that for sure in 180 seconds. Our people signal SR. It's been decided to storm and search here. But first our learned pundits have to draw the garden man's attention away from the nice main door of the house, which we visited. Our attack must very much be a surprise." I want to run screaming in and kick open the shed door. But Jun says:

- Now comes the hard part. For that, we use our specialists in disguise and diverting people's attention from where it is happening. A mistake now can easily cost lives. Our man today is named Edik de Toro. He comes from the Department of Special Affairs. We call them: "The Pickwick Club". A group of inventive colleagues with dexterity and who just love to perform. Edik de Toro must now be dressed and made up like a crazy woman in the 40s, with a checkered kitchen skirt, red shirt, with a sun hat and yellow tennis shoes. The "lady" carries an ordinary butterfly net on a pole. Edik speaks clearly and distinctly, but can talk doubly stupid! People don't understand him, but they try. Forgetting everything else in the meantime.

And sure enough, suddenly there is a "lady" with a butterfly net a few meters from us -

in the garden adjacent to the Benedict house's garden. The gardens are only separated by a low hedge. Police Assistant Edik de Toro now unfolds and goes hunting along the hedge with his net. The garden fellow with the spade, lets a spade be a spade and comes closer: "May I ask what you think you catch there?" Edik swings the net, looks in it and shows it over the hedge to the man, while he says:

"My best man, could you come gamely low, if it never had to be over?"

The man steps closer and looks down into the net:

- Yes, thank you! You can say that. - Edik winks at the garden man:

- *Yes, because the most you him the hood tonk - you see, man?*

- I guess we can always find some hobos to help with that.

- *The hike hippies are your yocks. If not the yummy yuppies for kids sake so.* The man crosses his arms:

"Yes, but everyone does." and a little unsure: "Isn't that what you mean?" Edik resumes his hunt along the hedge:

- *Personally, I think that I to you and many others too go fermented. And remember as for no reason wrong to put together. That's how it is!*

The man now stands close to the hedge:

- What are you talking about - and what are you doing in Mr Bidel's garden, if I may ask?

- Edik puts his hands to his sides:

- *You may always task and ask if you are not up to people in trouble, you know. For answer appointed is often satisfied and confidential released. Don't you think so?*

"Are you mad madam?" it comes a little shrill from the man, and now I fully recognize the tall man from the forest who stopped Pollyanna and me. - Edik swings his net:

- *I got them: scelestus fures et latrones! Rarely like catching and luck when the time is tinker time. That's often the reason, ha! if you don't mind?* - The garden man opens his

mouth to answer something, and there is a big crykangaroo bang. And five from the Police Task Force, in black uniforms with white numbers on the back, storm through the front door shouting:

"POLICE - ARMED!"

Edik de Toro throws his net and jumps over the hedge with a crowbar and raised police badge, past the man and the spade towards the shed where two officers are struggling with the door. The garden man stands paralyzed and stares before he leaves the garden at full gallop. With direction past Jun and me. - Jun whispers: "We come when you call!" and as he passes our hideout, CID Officer Junita Dinkelfield almost hovers perpendicular to the man and hits him at knee level. The man tumbles down to a very unprepared belly landing. And before he can say "two coffees and a seat in the shade!" has Jun crossed his long legs in an unsightly but effective leg lock:

"It's the police! You're under arrest!" The man is bleeding from the face and groping for something to his left. And Jun presses the leg lock into place with her upper body.

"Eutille!" shouts Jun. "Off with it!" And now I see that it is a pistol. I kick it away. A voice behind me says:

"Ms Officer Leglock on the Warpath!" and a policeman takes over our garden man with the words:

- And what did she caught this time? Well, isn't it Mr Zimnat?

Mr Lupo Zimnat. Nice good day! The world is small. Being happy to help you the handcuffs on!

- Let's call it: show of hands, it comes from Jun, who continues:

"You are charged with violence, robbery and deprivation of liberty. You have..."

- Shut up you bitch! Slip home to the chamber pot you live in! shouts our garden man.

Jun wrinkles her nose: "Yrk! ... I have to make you aware of ..!"

"Are you deaf as a monkey shit too?" the man moans:

"CUN CURSY BITCH! Look what you've done!".

The officer takes Mr Zimnat's cap. It bears the Forest Department's mark. He holds it out:

- My name is CID Officer Steen Nicholson. If you grunt pong turd against skilled people in our corps, I can stand on one leg while I help you smell your own cap, Mr Lupo Zimnat, Esquire. And if that's not enough, your fellow prisoners in Pilatus Prison are also

allowed to smell it. B-u-t, that's not the fastest way to make friends, Sir. - Nicholson puts the cap in a bag and hands it to Jun. Jun has picked up the pistol:

"... as well as illegal firearms possession." The gun ends up in another bag.

But I, Eutille, am already at full speed on my way to the shed. Feel my legs shaking under me. There is noise and shouts of commands from the house. Reinforcement has arrived at the shed:

"GO BACK! SHOOTING!" And two shots blow the padlock away. The bottom lock breaks up Edik de Toro, and he steps aside. They throw in a few light balls and use mirrors on poles.

"IT'S THE POLICE!" they shout, invading the shed. Edik holds me back. From inside the shed, shouts are made:

"SAMARITES AND TWO STRETCHERS!" the cry is repeated outside the shed.

And then it goes fast. Pollyanna and another woman are carried out and up near the pathway, where they receive treatment. Pollyanna does not see me but lives. Pollyanna Lives! She is with me again! Jun has collected our things and is holding me back:

"Give them peace to work!" I whisper:

"You're bleeding on your left hand, Jun, and look at your clothes!" Jun looks down at herself:- We usually say: you can't catch a wolf with two knitting needles.

- How brave you are, Jun!

- You are allowed to be afraid, as long as you do your duty! says Jun, shaking our Santu cans: We've actually collected a nice sum. They will be happy about that in Santu Avantis. - We will wait a bit and then slip more closely. Pollyanna has a hideous bloody streak diagonally across her face. She now has a large bandage on her left leg. She tries to wave me towards her with a bandaged right hand. Smiling weakly. And I gently say "Pollyanna! I love you! Forgive me!"

- Wait a minute! - says the Samaritan. Jun squeezes my hand and holds me:

- Your sister has lost a lot of blood, but seems to be doing well. How skillful you have been, Eutille. Stay here with your sister! I'm needed over here.

Where there was none before, people crowd together. Curious residents with or without

children. Barking dogs. People shout:

"What's going on?"

"What are they looking for?"

Chariots of various kinds are approaching. And mounted police on the spot keep people away so the police can work. Officers on different tasks in different uniforms work in the house, in the garden and in the shed. - I bend over Pollyanna. She is drowsy but smiles weakly. I kiss her cheeks and forehead. And she says something, but I can't hear it. Must be very down to her:

"Is that you? I thought—I should never—see you again." I dab our tears away from her face with my handkerchief. The Samaritan lays a hand on my arm:

"- not too long!"

Suddenly I'm spun around. It's Noah! Tears also run down his cheeks. He hugs me and kisses my forehead and hugs me hard again:

"God bless you, Eutille! All good protect you!" And then he falls to his knees at Pollyanna. Now it's my turn to hold back a Samaritan. Pollyanna has light in her eyes. But has no strength to lift her arms. Noah is right down by her, whispering and whispering as he caresses her face and kisses her hands.

And then I see that Dimas is standing behind me in a black uniform. He says softly to me:

"They must have some time to find each other," and he takes me up the pathway and says: - Yoko is now with us in Setorium, we are not taking any chances! - Dimas gives me a hug: We haven't got them all, Eutille, but the two you met in the forest belong to the inner circle, and we took them here. Plus four others who came running out of town at great speed. We look forward to speaking with them, Eutille. You and Jun Dinkelfield have become more popular in the corps than planned. Without you, we don't believe it would have gone so smoothly and quickly.

"Dimas, Jun says she is allowed being afraid as long as she does her duty."

- Several of us have tried to lose a colleague in the service. Our people are my flesh and

blood, Eutille. Before an action, they sweat and press themselves. But when we shout, "CHARLIE GO!" they are razor sharp and don't put a foot wrong. And Dimas takes a few small steps. I am in. We laugh, we dance! And suddenly I'm little Eutille with her play uncle. We see and understand each other: play and seriousness, light and shadow in our eyes. And I press into him. Sucks a warm strong feeling of life to me.

I am drawn to a small group of officers who also count: Edik de Toro, Gaston with Cairo, and Jun and a few more. The other officers stop their work for a moment and face the group and shout:

"UNUS EX NOSTRUM!"

And the group thanks with a salute which I imitate by looking at Jun. She says to me:

"It is our motto, which we also use to honor someone who has made a special effort."

- I don't deserve it, Jun! - I whisper. June smiles:

- It's our way of saying thank you, Eutille. We now have your mother's cross. - She shows it to me, and I nod:

- That's it!

- You get it back when we don't need it anymore. Sisters Grit and Kara, we'll have a good long tea chat with us. And the other lady in the shed is a tourist, it is believed. We have driven her off to Ubitorama Hospital. She is unconscious and in critical condition. And Eutille, I also say thank you for your great help! We need all our horses now, including Chance and Ludwig. But you can drive with your prince, our skilled assessor, Relan Unusu. Into our secured dormitories in Setorium. You take the gig with the brown mare further on. That's what's left. Our coupe wagons and the Landauer are also occupied. Your sister Yoko is waiting for you in Setorium.

"But Jun, what about Pollyanna?" I ask. Jun just needs to exchange a few words with a colleague. Then she points:

- Pollyanna has just driven, and has Mr Noah Courson with her. We are also sending her to the hospital now. She needs peace and care. Maybe we can talk to her tomorrow. We must know what has happened to her and the lady Cona Abello with whom she slept. You will be kept informed of the situation while you are in Setorium. And our dorm rooms

aren't that bad either.

19. The trip to Setorium

The mare that pulls us is confusingly called "Mila". Like my mother. I feel violated. But probably too tired to bring up the subject. I'm more concerned with sitting alone close to Relan. He holds the reins with a perfect coachman's grip. But it's blown up and we find the coachmen's cloaks.

"Is it far Relan?"

- Yes, at this pace, he replies. - We can hear the noise from Blackbird Path for some time.

- We are going far to the south and then to the east. Are you freezing?

- No, Relan. Not when we sit close. Relan explains:

- We prefer to avoid the holes, so I can't use the narrow roads. The sun will soon set, and I love you, Eutille. He says, as if it is an astronomical phenomenon. He doesn't even look at me. I say in the same tone:

- Yes, let's take the main roads. The full moon will rise soon and I love you, Relan.

We're on our way out of town. "Stop" shouts a couple of female officers. We are told to wait. - As we drive on, I tell Relan about the arrest of Lupo Zimnat. Relan is amused and we laugh together for a long time and end up - kissing each other. A kiss! - My prince takes me around the neck with his right hand and his thumb under my chin. Kisses me again so it can't be misunderstood! And the mare, aka my mother, Mila, pulls crookedly to follow her "daughter's" adventure. And I get a violent urge to scream. Scream with joy, but luckily don't. Relan puts his forehead against mine:

"Now you're a dishonorable woman, while I'm just like men is most. But Eutille, you've got me on the hook, well and truly, with barbs and fork. Just lock my heart up with you, and throw away the key! Then I'm yours forever." - I kiss him again:

- You are my prince, and no one else! I'd rather die on Blackbird Path 7 than live without you, I whisper to him.

A little later he says:

"We are engaged, Eutille."

- Yes, Relan!

- But you are a little short of being old enough for us to get married. And we must have your guardian's word and hand on it. Plus I need my father's blessing, which I easily gets. He loves your furniture and rode with your father. If we can get those points in place, I think we should apply for an age dispensation in the public guardianship. So we can marry earlier: *It is you, Your Royal Highness, Princess Eutille, and no one else, I want to marry, in good faith and in bad times. From here until death.* - I want to kiss him one more time, but I think that might not be the right answer. So I smile and nod, and squeeze his right hand:

- *Yes, Your Royal Highness, Prince Relan, I have locked up your heart and thrown away the key as you asked me to. And my heart is also yours on faith and promises in good times and bad. From here till death.* - And my royal highness takes hold of my waist and pulls me close to him, so that I feel his warm and intoxicating scent of male assessor.

- But Relan, you forget that my guardian is Master Bartos! (And the cart sails a bit violently through a hole in the forest road.) Relan holds the mare and has to get down and turn on the lights. They are smart. Burns oil and the glass collects the light, so that with a little good will you can see the way. We continue.

- We can take a shortcut through "Feux Follets", I know two wide roads through - or at least one wide road, says Relan.

"RELAN! THEATER OF THE LIGHTMEN!" I exclaim, looking at him horrified.

- Forget it! he says, and continues:

- Dimas' orders and awards hang in the corridor between the Hall and our canteen. That is, if they hang there. He takes them down and we hang them up again. We can't get enough of that man. - Relan adds:

- don't mention Master Bartos' na... (at the same time the carriage takes another hole -) ...me more on this trip; this is a worn-out old wagon, and we still have a few kilometers to go. I make my prince a tight squeeze and ask:

"Does Dimas' Caritas order hang there too"

- Yes, both his and Mizuto's hang there in red and white. They were looking for robbers.

- Dimas said that the police now have both the two woodsmen who stopped me and especially Pollyanna. Who is the other, the fat little one? - Relan makes two small snaps with the whip:

- Lupo Zimnat's right hand is called: Porka Bosaventus. He is from the Republic of Angatus. Zimnat and Bosaventus are local members of an international circle. A circle where men swear allegiance to "Sarracenia", and get a small green and a small red circle tattooed in - a very private place on the body. The two men had headquarters in the basement, which the sisters Grit Benedict and Kara Benedict had rented out to them for 100 flats per month. The ring is one of the worst things you can think of. We are busy always being one step ahead of Sarracenia. Or "psychocenia" as we call them in the office.

- Mr Bosaventus was bathing in a large tub in the basement when we stormed. And he suddenly had a great desire to finish the bath, to grab a double-barreled shotgun, and crawl out through a basement window. The problem was just that his "by eye sight" failed in a most inconvenient way. His person, clad in nothing, had scrambled halfway out the window when higher powers stood before and behind him and freed him from the shotgun:

"Have you finished the water, Mr Bosaventus?" And:

"Is the nasty bite wound on the arm from the window here?" And:

"Is it the ladies upstairs who scratched your face, Mr Porka Bosaventus?"

- Our people tossed coins over who should have him, concludes Relan. - We must pull out carefully and make ourselves known so that three closed wagons and two mounted policemen can pass us. As we drive on, I ask:

"But what is your task, Relan?"

1)

I must ensure that those arrested know what they are accused of, and tell them about their rights and duties. Make sure they can get a lawyer they can accept.

2)

I read all explanations and reports from our people. And I ask for follow-up interviews or conduct them myself. That is, of the accused as well as the participating police officers and witnesses.

3)

I have to collect threads in the case. Create a timeline on it, so we can get an overview of it. The timeline comes up on the wall, if the wall is big enough in my office.

4)

As well as prepare what we call a WH catalog of small cards in alphabetical order, which describes in detail:

What has happened or found.

Where it happened or was found.

When it happened or was found.

Who participated in the act.

- as well as references to other cards. The small cards get very worn out quickly, can you believe!

5)

I must also call expert witnesses who support or refute our claims. And I must prepare a comprehensive report that describes the case in clear language.

6)

In addition, I must write an indictment for use in court. What charges can we bring against the accused. Which laws have been violated and which penalties should be imposed in the opinion of the prosecution.

7)

Lead the matter in court. That is, conduct the case in relation to the judge, defense counsel, witnesses and parties.

"Then I can understand why you write so quickly, Relan."

- But Eutille, there are four of us on that job, luckily. And after our - conversation - this morning, I am disqualified to interrogate you again. But I am also incompetent in terms of taking the matter to court. It will probably be our chief prosecutor Silva Villam.

"Are you upset about it, Relan?"

- No, certainly not, Eutille. You just had to meet her one day. Everyone in the department likes her. And they say about her that she can get a giraffe sentenced for stretching its neck. Mrs Villam is always friendly and direct. Was my tutor when I started at Dimas. She taught me the basis of my work. And she also taught me to find the "diagonals" in a case. This roughly means: which questions you don't need to ask. Or what can be conveniently left out. But also, to see the matter from several sides. *Audiat et altera pars*: Maybe the accused is innocent? Maybe we are wrong? Maybe we have walked into a trap? But she also taught me: To go after the cardinal points of the case. Points that can decide an entire case in the eyes of the judge or judges. After all, cardinals also know the dark side of man. Silva likes to draw small cardinals where she thinks something is particularly important. Could be cardinals that are close to fire, swarmed by bees, walk on thin ice or climb withered trees. Very lifelike!

"If I have become a good assessor, Eutille, then we probably have the explanation there."

- Do you also draw in your cases, Relan?

- Yes, actually I've become quite good at it - that is. Hardly as good as Silva. No, not like her at all.

- Have you ever drawn balloons? I say uncertainly.

- Well, no, I don't think so - no, no balloons.

- Not girls either? Clothes free girls?

- Where do you want to go, Eutille? Should I? Naked women in court? Would definitely cost me both license and wig!

- You know what I mean, Relan. You must have known some girls?

- Girls, yes. They ran away screaming when they heard that I work during the day and proofread at night. Many of my vignettes are drawn at night. I can't help it, Eutille. I love the law and it loves me. - I hope so. But after the meeting, you know, I have become very doubtful. Doubt if the law reciprocates my feelings. Relan smiles and winks at me.

But - Eutille, my only one! I must admit that I drew you. A fair number of times. And in nice clothes, as you are. As best I could. At night you have to believe. I didn't get done what I had to do. And the strangest thing is that I praise myself for it! Have you known anything so strange?

Relan looks up the treetops a little, and continues: I sleep and dream, across the table, you know. Is back as the foolish boy of the class. Or dreaming of a girl close to our conversation. I especially remember a dream where I meet you in the forest, Eutille. You sit on a branch and call my name. And I have no idea how to get up to you. And I have no idea how to draw you, there on the branch. You are wonderfully lovely at that height, Eutille! And at other heights you are also a free range heartbreaker. If I were Justitia, I'd be worried now. Quite strongly disturbed.

Relan is truly the Master of surprises! I keep finding new sides of him. New excuses to admire and love him. - We don't say anything, the road doesn't allow it. And since we have a safe path under the wheels again, my thoughts are back on the Blackbird Path:

- But Relan, do you think you have enough to get them convicted?

- We'll see, Eutille. We already have enough for three long prison terms I think.

- Have you been to the Pilatus prison yourself?

- For me, it's a workplace, Eutille.

- I mean, what's it like to live there?

- Both sad and exciting. Sad to lose your freedom. But exciting to live there.

- How? What do you mean, Relan?

- I mean, live with plenty of space for small things and a view of the wall. And good variety throughout the day: outdoor exercise with pickpockets, games with swindlers and eat with poisoners. It is so popular that there is a waiting time at several departments. We are building a new wing next year. No one should go in vain!

But Eutille! In the cellar, no. 7, we found personal belongings of two men. Not least a pair of shoes missing a corner on the left heel. We also found a lot of household utensils, as well as some extremely striking details: weapons and ammunition, a coil of jute rope similar to the pieces of rope we found at the crime scene in the forest. We also found many small bottles with labels with numbers and letters. There are interesting liquids in the bottles. And we found small tins of white powder which we don't think is salt and sugar. - We will try to prove that these things, in whole or in part, have been payment for the delivery of other women. We have several unsolved cases which we now hope to reopen.

But imagine, Eutille: Up in the living room, in a dresser with tablecloths and napkins, we found a meter-long blue cloth with a piece missing. If the piece we found in the forest, with the remains of a liquid, corresponds to the blue cloth in shape, color and fabric, I would rather not be called Porka or Lupo when the case proceeds.

The more I hear Relan's voice, the more I feel like his princess. But I also miss my sister princesses more and more. - Relan adds:

- there were no casualties if Mrs Cona Abello survives. And we had three wounded of our own, including your Officer Jun. Only three shots were fired: two at the shed and a warning shot when we took the four people south of town. I don't know anything about them yet. -

"Are you listening Eutille? Are you sleeping?" - And yes, I sleep. I dream of Grit and Kara in red Santu jerseys. They offer me small bottles and cans. And I lie down more and more in a large tub of soapy water. And they look at me from above:

"Are you coming from far? Are you coming from far?" And their faces come closer and closer and I sink and sink into the frothy water - hold my breath and struggle and Relan says:

"Eutille, shall I carry you in?"

20. Headquarters

I dream on. Dreaming the forest. - Dreaming that I am jumping down and running in the forest. Someone is running after me, but am I scared? I almost know who someone is. Hoping (maybe) that he will catch up with me. I jump over a fence and a stream. I hear him laugh. I change direction and blow away. But he gets closer and closer. We both laugh. - He grabs me and I fight back. I wriggle free and wake up in a real bed. I sit up and rub my eyes. Am in a big bright room with funny pictures on the walls and a big mirror in a mahogany frame and Yoko in a bed perpendicular to the one I've been sleeping in. I want to wake her up but stop myself. A housecoat hangs by each bed. I take mine over me, and in a white-painted cupboard are my clothes, minus the Santu shirt, which I have otherwise gotten used to. Yoko's clothes are also there. And on a nice little mirrored shelf are toiletries for us. A small sign on the wall says: "*Remember to check in!*"

Out in the hallway I greet several other women, some dressed others like me. Probably most female officers. They talk quietly together, giggle and point towards the washroom. I'm going out there. There is a large black achriporcius sitting on the sink table. I never dreamed they could be so colossal! Its many eyes focus sharply on me and it hands me its venomous sting to greet me. The other ladies forbid me to kill or remove it:
- Miss Lipatel, finally leave it alone. It's our mascot Daisy Naeva! She comes when you call! - I then put my shoes back on and wash myself at the sink while being glared at by Daisy Naeva - who slowly advances on me every time I look away.

It is only when I come clean back from the washroom, that I see a small note lying

there. I take it and Yoko says:

"Good morning Tille, how I've missed you!"

- I've missed you even more, Yoko! - We hug each other. Yoko brushes her hair:

- Noah told me about everything you did yesterday, Eutille! - I give Yoko another hug and some small kisses on the forehead:

- He must have exaggerated what I did. I was just there.

- No, you were very brave, Eutille! - Noah has also said that Polly has had plenty of liquid, salt and sweet, as well as some betula pills for pain after blows and falls. Her headache has subsided and she has slept for periods last night. In the morning she was able to eat a little and was up and walking a bit. Could speak for a short time. But she is still dizzy when she stands and walks. - We go to the window. The note is from Dimas:

"Come down when you wake up. We can eat together and you can get the latest news.

Kisses and hugs, your faithful Dimas!"

While we get ready, we talk about what happened and what we experienced. But a lot has to wait, because we can't let Dimas wait. We walk hand in hand down to the Hall, to the left through a corridor with many historical honors and decorations as well as props from the police's work over many years. And through the large police canteen where we greet the many officers there. Salute back and forth. I'm learning it. From there into a high-ceilinged living room behind the canteen. Here there is billiards with balls in front, and the billiard cues on the wall. Along the other wall, a large galloping game marked: "RAVI". And on the third wall hangs a target for large darts. And on the third wall hangs a target for large darts. Above the disc it says: "Kill the evil thoughts!" - A real man's room!

In the middle of the room a table covered with white tablecloth and napkins and a large flower bouquet of orange Emmaus roses. And fine service and cutlery in silver. It is the local breakfast table at it is best: freshly baked wheat bread and toasted corn bread. Freshly milked cow's milk, freshly squeezed orange juice, drinking water, olive oil, three kinds of cheese, sausages, small pâtés, star fruits, chutney and, last but not least, freshly

brewed coffea arabica with a small perdonium for sugar.

There are only two people present, Noah and Elno Trenson. They have the darts up.

Trenson hits the eye of the target every time. Noah says:

"I don't understand. First in the gallop game and now here in darts! A gentleman would let me win one out of three. But you, my Dearest Director Trenson, You take it all." Elno

Trenson scratches his nape:

- My dearest Noah Courson, coming second is also very honorable - glorious, or if so ... -

But I accept your argument and would like to be a gentleman. Give me a stroke of your stick. But screw off the lion first. I don't want to be bitten in addition. Noah raises a hand:

- We must have been a bit wrong about each other. My thoughts about the future are like a fur animal. A soft tasmacophilus that keeps slipping away from me. I will catch it and smack you with it! Is that good enough? Trenson laughs:

- I think we should be more persons to catch those kind of beings! - A "gentleman" steps aside for Mr Courson. A "friend" follows Noah on his way. What do you say if we first catch a good friendship?

- Alborado! I'm in on that! And mamba take the soft thought with the strong bite. Then we are two about that cophilus! Noah says. He pours two glasses of water and hands Trenson one. They whisper together. They poke each other and have fun. They toast and empty their glasses. Elno hands Noah a dart and winks at him. Noah hits the spot! They both laugh and shout in unison:

"Kill the evil thoughts!" and:

- No, there are the ladies! - the gentlemen bow synchronously. And also pulls out chairs for us, exactly at the same time.

"Dimas is on his way, and Goro, runs the business for me. And Eutille, I don't know how to repay you for all you've done?" says Noah, giving me a loving hug. Yoko smiles around and we bob. I feel embarrassed:

- Dear Noah, one day I will tell you everything. Who did what. - Yoko thanks the gentlemen and asks:

"Thank you for the beautiful welcome. And you, Dir. Trenson?" - Elnó Trenson sits down:

- I am coming as a party to the case; represents Master Bartos, who after all represents the aggrieved party: Miss Pollyanna Lipatel. Both myself and Puno Bartos were questioned yesterday about the matters. - Yoko:

- If Master Bartos loves us so much, shouldn't he show up himself? Trenson raises two fingers and lets them rotate:

- My mouth says, that he is very busy and that I can do a good job. - He slowly folds his hands:

- My heart says - that you are right. Now is the time for him to show ... in the last months, light and shadow have swapped places in my life, and this case might cut down the tree I'm sitting in. - Yoko says quietly:

- Mr Trenson, with the wingspan you have, you are closer to heaven than earth!

- Thank you, Miss Yoko. You are unreasonably friendly. Get me right! To Master Puno Fiala Bartos I owe the life I have been given. Yes, that I live! He is blessed with a big heart. But does it turn right? - Trenson supports his head and says thoughtfully: Puno, Puno, Puno! - you don't buy it, it's always a gift!

And in comes Dimas Porter accompanied by Mizuto Maringa. They are in blue commissar uniforms and salute around, and Yoko gets a morning kiss from Dimas:

"Miss Yoko Lipatel, it's eight-zero-one-kiss." Yoko returns the kiss:

- Mr Porter, You're under arrest, charged-with-kissing!

Mizuto Maringa takes over the case from Dimas Porter, who has declared himself incompetent. The bowls go around. While we eat, Dimas tells us about the situation. But first he forgets that he has kissed Yoko good morning. Kisses her gently again, and for quite a long time. They take turns not letting go of each other. We smile and shake our heads; I just smile. Actually, I'm laughing to myself. Then I get up and hug them both at once. And Dimas kisses me on the cheek. Yoko on the other cheek at the same time.

Noah also laughs:

- A thorough and very charming breach of etiquette! But no stoplights from here, Mr Dimas and Mizuto are clear stars in the sky of my life. They have now twice saved my future Pollyanna's life. I am deeply indebted to you. Dimas and Mizuto clap heels with two little hand-on-heart nods. And now we all sit and Dimas tells:

- And specifically about Pollyanna, I can say that the hospital will keep her for one more day and will then assess whether we can get her over here. She has started to be able to speak, but still has difficulty walking and difficulty eating. It is estimated that we cannot yet question her. You may only visit her one at a time. Noah has been over there until now. And Pollyanna wants to see her sisters. We can send you, Yoko, over here this morning, Eutille this afternoon and Noah again this evening. Do you live with that? - And yes, we can all do that! And Dimas continues:

- The technical investigations confirm that the pieces of rope and blue cloth match the coil and cloth found at the address in Goangnu Village, and that the liquid in the cloth is the same as in a vial from the house marked: NT768. The liquid has a strong anesthetic effect.

Commissioner Mizuto further contributes:

- The four men we took south of the city are silent, but we are working to name them. And we have also searched another address in Goangnu Village and seized a vehicle, a number of documents and maps of the area. As well as bundles of small white marker posts and burglary tools. We have also found this dogcart about 5 km. to the south. The cart is thrown into a water hole. The driver has ridden the horse away to the west through the forest. We want to find that horse. It might "tell us" about more accomplices. And now I come to the hard part, unfortunately. We are facing a gang involved in international crime: the "Sarracenia Circle". And that is why we are also working closely with several other countries on the clarification.

Dimas adds:

- The police are facing a major investigation into what happened. And our assessor Relan Unusu is working hard to collect and set up the case, but has also declared himself incompetent. So he can't take it to the court. It will be conducted by one of our other skilled prosecutors as soon as the investigation is completed and the indictment drawn up. They will demand severe penalties, not least if Mrs Cona Abello dies.

The plan has been to resell Pollyanna and Mrs Abello for the highest possible price. Somewhere abroad. But before then they would be used for extortion. Since yesterday, at the address, Blackbird Path, we have found a letter with cut-out letters. The letter is not finished. It is attached a tuft of hair. There is nothing about where the letter should be sent. The text says that they have taken Miss Yoko Lipatel in custody, demanding a substantial ransom:

- Hang out a blue ribbon: "We pay!"

- Or make it red: "We don't pay!"

That is, they think Pollyanna is Yoko! There is also nothing about where and how the money is to be paid, and where and how Pollyanna is to be released if so? A few more hours and we might not have stopped them. Pollyanna and Cona Abello could very well disappear forever. Like many women before them. Live or die under new names.

Mizuto adds:

- There is no letter about Cona Abello. We now know her nationality and know that she is married and the mother of two little boys. But we have also found a small black book with names and international addresses. And in the back of the book a long list of women. In that list you will find both Yoko Lipatel and Cona Abello. We are working hard with that material, and in particular with getting in touch with Mrs Abello's family. Her condition remains critical. We take good care of her. Mrs Cona Abello and Miss Pollyanna Lipatel is now both victim and main witness in the case. This makes them vulnerable, and also puts people close to them at risk.

Dimas continues:

- We also have an officer outside Pollyanna's door, and a female officer in a smock. She is constantly probing the hospital. If Pollyanna has to go outside her living room, the guard goes with her. In addition, we are ready to replace or increase the shift at the hospital. We have held several internal meetings on the matter, and estimate that the danger of new attacks has dropped from the red to the yellow zone since yesterday. But we recommend that you girls get a qualified escort, or be driven by us. When you have to go to or from Ubitorama Hospital; yes, wherever you go! It is also important that you help us. Use your eyes well! Do nothing yourself, but inform the guard if you notice anything suspicious!

21. We come when you call!

Dimas asks if we have any questions about the case? We don't have. And then I venture some questions:

"Why does a big black achriporcius live in the laundry room?"

"And why is it called Daisy Naeva?"

"And is it true that it comes when you call?" - Dimas smiles:

- Relan or Jun could tell you a lot about that, but Mizuto you also know it well?

- Yes, thank you, says Mizuto, with your permission I will start somewhere else. In former times we had three female police officers in the corps of only 250 men. And we found that the women were good at some tasks: verbal handling of conflicts, tackling violent women, questioning silent people, etc. We men can do all that too, but the suspicion is that the ladies can be just that little bit better in some situations. We are therefore now up to 1 in 6 in the corps being a woman, that is 100 out of 600. And we have to go even further. The female officers are very diligent and brave, and have their own lingo. For example they regularly call each other Daisy.

"And why now?" It sounds from the door. Criminal Investigation Department Officer Junita Dinkelfield in uniform! Bada Wow! - How I would like - to be as beautiful as she

is there. And dare to do everything she does, Jun - I think. Mizuto beckons her in:

"How's your left hand?"

- It has not completely fallen off. But watch out, I have an extra hand here!

- Sit down Jun!

- I have eaten!

- Have a drink and tell us about Daisy so we can learn from the past! - Jun smiles sweetly and salutes, and sits down:

- Thank you for the kind words Mr Police Commissioner! - Mizuto claps and we follow his example. Jun continues:

- Our mascot Daisy Naeva? - Someone or something sent her. She is always homesick. Needs ... Will come when ... We're just trying to help her. Give her a case number. And we didn't come up with the name Daisy ourselves. - Jun drinks a little and goes on:

You may have heard about the Jirisia case? We are going back a hundred years. And we are going to the big city to the south: Bello Seguro. The city experienced an unusually high number of cases of wife violence or wife murder. The victims' husbands were almost all acquitted in the court, but then they risked getting into strange accidents. The clues pointed to a small house at the north end of Bello Seguro near Lake Matrum Lacus. The house was named: "I come when you call!" neatly painted over the light blue gable. A retired schoolteacher lived in the house. Hers alibi could be confirmed by the other elderly whist ladies who met at her place. And yet it succeeded to get her and several of her whist ladies sentenced to long prison terms. Some drawings, drawn by a deaf and mute little girl named Jirisia, helped decide the case.

The teacher explained in court that the laws of our time rise from ancient times and customs. And she told about the ancient city of Laposhida, where women were sacrificed to the Gods. - The teacher finally claimed that equality before the law would benefit everyone. And offered to take the same punishment that a man in her place would have received. However, the court believed that punishment should never violate the sense of justice. Justice was not a commodity, said the presiding judge.

But the teacher's defense speech in court started a movement for women's rights - right up to today. The woman's name was Daisy Song Garcia. She died after 7 years in prison. But she is commemorated in Bello Seguro with a statue, and with the fact that the street she lived on was named Daisy Garcia Allé.

Noah spreads his arms:

"Yes, justice is homesick? It's quite possible. A charming thought as we sit right here!"

He narrows one eye and asks:

- But do you support what these whist ladies did?

- We female police officers of course distance ourselves from her methods; but if you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten. We seek inspiration in her thoughts on women's demands for justice. It is not our task to judge, but to draw the cases forward and prepare them for the courts. She is our Daisy. And "We come when you call!" has become our battle cry. We are on the side of the victims; regardless of gender and age. Personally, I am in favor of the woman becoming her own guardian. And that marriage also becomes an equal friendship. And excuse me, I have to be on duty! - Jun salutes and leaves.

Noah claps his hands and:

- Are there doomed trousers for everyone? We men are bigger and stronger. Isn't it our natural job to protect... (Noah's voice breaks...) our wife and create a space around her? -

He leans forward, looks down. Keeps on the table. Says quietly: A room that can make her feel safe and happy? - Trenson gets up and sits down next to Noah - and says calmly:

- Yes, mutual security and happiness. Words and actions. Need and ability. It makes sense. But should we also protect our partner against his or her will? We live in enlightened times, Noah! In matriarchal animals such as elephants, hyenas and bonobos, females appear smarter than males. When you put a spot on their body and they see themselves in a mirror, they will turn to see the spot clearly. That is, if they understand that they see themselves. In several studies, female animals pass the mirror test faster.

Noah has found himself, holds up one flat hand as if it were a mirror and sets his hair with the other:

- Yes, women have an intimate relationship with mirrors and spot cleaning. And hyenas have lots of spots. But with the lions, the men decide. Because they are the biggest and strongest. Noah raises his lion staff. - And then I have a hand up:

"With the lions, the women can only watch while their children are bitten to death by a stronger man than their own; and they can then start all over again. It is written in a book: "On the Lions' Family Traditions", by Alka Okoro." Mizuto smiles at me:

- Polygamy and child sacrifice?

And Noah? His face twisted:

- Received and understood, Eutille! A stupid solution to a smart problem. But I wonder if men are a bit better than women in other animal species such as baboons, pigs and Santas, laughs Noah, when it comes to making something fall over?

Dimas has a twinkle in his eye:

- especially when they tumble home after the party. He continues: in marriage you give each other your word and promise of fidelity: you trust each other and contribute to each other. And with children in the house, the parents' attention merges with the children.

And the man refrains from biting his own or other people's children. Noah rounds off:

- Ladies and Gentlemen, I take it to heart! But remember that men and women are different! This is our framework of understanding, our conclusion. - And admittedly,

when I stand in foam and shave myself in front of the mirror, I can easily doubt whether I am Noah, or perhaps a modern Daisy incognito. - Common hilarity! Yoko intervenes:

- When it comes to life and death, we are all completely the same. Noah and Daisy! We can move away from life and lose it. Or life can move away from us and life loses us. I

strongly feel that we are left with a sense of guilt over what has happened. A failure compared to Pollyanna. A feeling that is homeless, because what could we have done?

Will we women from now on live in another invisible glass cage, which is even smaller than the one we live in now? Or should we all learn to understand and respect each other,

have compassion for afflicted or weaker people and let the creator measure and judge us?

Mizuto opposes: No, it is the police's job to create a safe and fair framework for the society we live in. A framework where there must be room for everyone, including Pollyanna and women like those Daisy fought for. - Dima's round of:

- Noah! Before Daisy's time, we had an opinion that what happened in the home was none of society's and authorities' business. The movement Jun Dinkelfield mentions divided the waters for and against. And the waves go high to this day. -Yoko raises her left hand:

- Are all the female police officers in the Daisy movement? - Mizuto:

- No, but a majority are positive about its ideas and results. - Trenson also wants to know:

- How are things with the male officers? - Dimas:

- There is no corresponding movement among the male officers, so we do not know the answer. But in the beginning they were e.g. against having female officers. Now there is a large majority in favor. Personally, I find that the Daisy movement, as Jun Dinkelfield describes it, is a strengthening of our overall police force.

22. Friends of Emmaus of the 1st degree

After lunch it's my turn to be with Pollyanna. Only now do I see how big it all is. Court building, police administration, detention center and the many colleges. On the building on the right it says: "Unus ex Nostrum" above the portal. Dir. Trenson has offered to escort me safely over to the Ubitorama Hospital, Dept. 3, Room 8. He starts with a compliment:

"I have been given the honor, Miss Eutille!" he says with a smile. I curtsy:

"You are always welcome, I am very grateful to you." We ride in a white-painted gig with a lively brown stallion. Elna Trenson has a small bouquet and a flat package with him.

And I have had three of the fine Emmaus roses. I'm a little embarrassed still having one of his transformation orbs in my pocket. But as we start, we pass by - Nicodemus! He holds out his hat like a bowl. Trenson holds on. Nicodemus says:

"I eat bread that is not baked. I drink wine that is not fermented. I sing songs that no one

hears". Trenson finds two coins. Gets down and puts them in the hat. Up again and about to start. Nicodemus, hat still in hand, is there again:

"I remember what has not happened. I climb mountains that have not been born. I live without breathing". Dir. Trenson sits a bit. Finds another coin and tosses from the box directly into the hat:

"End for today my good friend!"

But Nicodemus appears a third time. Shouting:

"I'm the childhood you didn't get. I'm the path you didn't walk. I'm the leap you didn't jump". Eln Trenson holds on. Sits silently - completely still. Descending slowly from the box. Calmly walks up to Nicodemus and hugs him repaid. - No more coins. No more words.

We slowly jolt away. There is not much traffic. People smile or wave at us, perhaps because a white gig is not what you usually see. Or maybe because people know Trenson? A carriage, a large closed Duncan, black with a red stripe and two white horses. Nice shiny! It appears out of nowhere and calmly follows us. On the trestle box three men. They are discussing something. Dir. Trenson tells me not to look back. I can see that he follows the carriage with quick glances. Trenson seems suddenly changed, like an archer who draws his bow. His eyes are like fore sights. My heart is pounding wildly, while Trenson seems icy calm. I don't know him like that! I admit to myself that I am afraid. But for what? - the carriage tails us closer. But we continue at the same pace. It follows us like a shadow. Turns when we turn. Now it's right behind us I can hear. After some time Trenson drives in the middle of Setorium Square. He raises the 1st and 5th fingers of the right hand above his head. And I can hear what sounds like a rattle somewhere. We turn around the Town Hall and down a side street. The black one is included. Suddenly a command is shouted from the carriage behind us: "PROHIB! PROHIB!" But Trenson doesn't stop. He continues calmly through two right turns. And a little later we are back in the town square with Duncan hot on our heels. - Then Trenson says:

"Hold on tight, Miss Eutille! Now we are going to kick the go! Burn the wheels!" And with a few energetic "GEE UP PAN! GEE UP PAN!" he sets our brown stallion at a

gallop across the square, with us tottering behind. Past the Town Hall and down a side street where he shouts: "BOON BOON bdrrrr", holding up the stallion and pulls the wheel brakes. Four large men roll out a cart of broken stones behind us. They disappear into the gates on either side. It's bad news, but not for us. Duncan struggles to slow down in time. And to turn the white horses. It then drives around the square. The street opposite is suddenly blocked by three, no four night watchmen with badges around their necks. Morning stars and a couple of dogs. They put a man down and point at something. But other streets now also seem blocked. There is a lot of shouting, but I can't see what is happening.

Trenson sends me a small checkmate smile. We drive calmly on while he praises the horse and caresses it with the whip:

"Look at him! What a body! Isn't he dear? It's his birthday today, and he's the one who gives us presents. It's a great shame to put wheels behind a riding horse. It makes me want to buy him! So true as the "r" in Trenson: I'll give him a kiss when we land."

- But he has a temper and wants to show his strength.

- You're right, Miss Eutille. With equal parts security and adventure, you get the best horse.

- Yes, and the best person, I say.

- No, Miss Eutille, we cannot think so. More is needed, if I may say so. Trenson leans towards me: "we didn't create ourselves".

"Pollyanna thinks we're like butterflies. A divine conjuration."

- Miss Eutille, we are part of all livings. For better or for worse. It is our life and death. And we know it. It makes us human.

He asks me to keep our experience a secret from strangers. I nod:

"What did they want?"

- There are more of us who would like to know. - I don't want to ask him what he himself thinks, but I can't help but constantly look back. I have my own theory about what they wanted! But everything seems normal. Is it just a bad dream you can wake up from?

Neither of us say anything. It's as if nothing happened. We are ourselves again, almost. But a whole new sense of security ties me closer, tight to Elno Trenson. I can't explain it better.

We drive quite a bit on the cobblestones, and get a generous massage from mother earth. Many streets and alleys criss-crossing:

- You can call me Elno! For me, you are always the little Tille that I was allowed to carry around every now and then. Miranda and I never had a child ourselves. I have known you since the time your mother drove you in a much smaller carriage than this one. You even rode on my shoulders that time. And at the last meeting, you have promoted me to Pirallo, your riding stag. And you, Miss Eutille, has become at least twice as big as then. But I haven't gotten bigger. So even though you should be riding on my shoulders now, we're just running this light white gig.

"I remember that you taught me to play chess. You let me win." Trenson laughs:

- A woman always wins by closer acquaintance. But women are not allowed to play chess, then men discover how clever they are.

- Your mother, Mila Lipatel, was a very clever woman. Women are better than men at finding their way. They read the experiences and remember the roads. Men read the words and forget the ways. - I feel a little embarrassed:

"I would like to say Elno to you. But bear with me!

- All abandoned, Miss Eutille. Now look, because we were talking about you, sorry, I drove to the right and not straight out like we're supposed to. - A man says: we drive in a triangle. A woman says: We're taking a big yellow house. Then we turn left at the figure of the golden wild boar and left again at the intersection with a well in the middle. - I laugh and sit back with my Emmaus flowers:

- I think YOU drove wrong because there are no triangles in your heart. One can entrust you with two secrets and get ten again next year. If you finally cheat on someone, it's yourself.

- You make me mute in a charming way, Eutille, says Elno and promises me a triangular piece of layer cake when we get back, and adds:

- However, I always have a triangle with me. A triangle that went to my heart. He points to the three snakebite scars on his right cheek:

- But I was lucky that it didn't stay in my heart, because then another coachman would have sat with you now, Eutille!

"Why were you bitten, Elno?"

- As children, we were not allowed to deal with snakes. But there was pocket money to be made when Mr Pattison, from the University of Setorium, came by with his bell cart. I helped my older brothers, and got a little for it. It was an expensive lesson! And yet? The snake taught me something, that has since saved me when it looked hopeless. In the fencing hall, yes and in life for better or worse.

- What did the snake do, Elno?

- It sounds eerie, but the snake smiled at me. Smiled the second before the chop came. I responded to the smile, not the slash. It saved my life. I will never forget that smile. Many have told me that snakes cannot smile. Let them believe it, Eutille! It will be between us.

- Elno slowly shakes his head and suddenly thinks of something else:

- Speaking of secrets: Eutille, you're going to get a real secret now and here. Yesterday my boss, Master Puno Fiala Bartos, received a courier on horseback. He brought sealed mail which he personally delivered to Master Fiala Bartos in his office. The courier was Mr Attaché Sandip Comar. I exchanged a few words with him before he left. He said that of course he could not reveal anything about the contents of the letter. But that his superior, Envoy Avitla Stun and Comar himself, had received a clear opinion from my boss prior to the meeting in the Santu house. A view that the women, meaning you and your sisters, were all looking forward to meeting the Ampundis Princes.

"How rude, Elno!"

- Yes, surprisingly! But remember, if even one of Master Bartos' "princess girls" unites with an Ampundis Prince, it will immediately transform Bartos himself into an Ampundis Prince. He will then sit on both sides of the table when business has to be discussed.

Elno goes on to say:

- I invited Sandip Comar up to the 4th floor. Showed him the room where the robbers had been, and we knocked on the neighboring room to look at our adorned foil. Six operations managers under chief architect Long Bowen worked at the same site on a 1:100 scale cardboard model of the new dam and associated power plant. They jumped up and saluted, but: "Gentlemen, don't let yourselves be disturbed." got them down again. We took the adorned foil and closed quietly behind us. Comar thoroughly admired the foil and practiced the classic eight parades with interesting variations. We elevated two knots in the balustrade to be the Oculi Diaboli of fencing. And we both got the touché in the first attempt. - When he left, Sandip and I, Elno, parted as Lotus Friends of the 1st degree.

- What does Lotus Friends of the 1st degree mean?

- That's - I basically have no idea, Princess Eutille, but it feels nice.

- It's something with valuable flowers, I say: - What would an Emmaus friendship of the 1st degree between Eutille and Elno mean to you?

- That would mean that I was like an uncle to you, Eutille. One you could trust. Your best friend!

- Thank you Elno! It also feels nice.

- But what was in the letter to Master Bartos, "Uncle" Elno?

- I have no idea either, and I must not know either. Master Bartos read the delivered letter alone. Changed into his red housecoat and went to his private swimming pool humming:

I sing roses, I sing lilies,
I lay leaves in your hand.
You are the only one I love
and my heart can understand.

23. The Ubitorama Hospital

Trenson gallantly helps me down from the gig and thanks me because he was allowed to look after me. I have to wait a bit while he talks privately with "our" brown stallion. The two seem to agree. Compliments are easily agreed upon! I'm trying to imagine the content:

"Happy birthday!"

- *Thank you Mr Director, it was a pleasure to assist you.*

- I think I owe you a kiss and a delicious saddle. What do you say to that?

- *Thank you. Trenson! Preferably bear skin, then there is one less, if you understand. You may keep the kiss. I am a vegetarian, but I know of a mare you are welcome to ...*

- Good! High Horse on that, and wait here!

- *Thank you very much, and watch the door step, Dir. Trenson!*

And a huge flock of red macaw birds take off and fly to the east, and some clattering hollow sounds like horseshoes sound out in the west. I haven't been here since I was seven years old. Trenson is ready again and holds the door for me. To reduce contagion, Ubitorama Hospital is built in the form of a cross surrounded by green gardens. The reception in the center is a large high-ceilinged room with eight sides. The light comes from above, and four slender palm trees along the sides welcome you. The entrance is a long hallway on one side. The three departments are to the left, straight ahead and to the right.

We are asked to wait there at the reception. We sit together on a bench along the wall and wait. In the middle of the room there is a white water art with a large beautiful female figure. With her open hands she pours water over kneeling women. There is an atmosphere of forgotten destinies, unspoken words.

You come and go. Staff, patients, coachmen and visitors. And yet the room rests in itself. - A little girl with fair hair. In a nice white shirt blouse and red and green skirt and ditto socks. She comes in from Dept. 1, and goes towards Dept. 2. But stops in front of

us, and smiles beautifully at us, but squints a little:

"Poor children! Can't you reach the water?" she takes a few handfuls and sprinkles us well. I feel insulted, but Elno lets out a hearty laugh:

"I'm drowning in graces. Thank you very much! What's your name, little Miss?"

"Don't play with strangers, Peony! says my mother." Trension try his pockets: "Oh! I have nothing to give her!"

- I have, Uncle Elno! I say, pulling out his large white transformation ball. He sends me a finger kiss and hands it to Peony:

- Thank you, and say hello to mom from Elno Trension!

Peony catches the ball. Gives it to the receptionist behind the glass, and trips into the 2nd Dept.

We sit nicely together in each of our thoughts.

"Uncle Elno, there's something I've been thinking about."

- Speak up, Eutille!

- Why do you sometimes call us Nono? Pause.

- A property in Avantis. I bought it from Master Bartos. Furnished it as an orphanage for lonely and abandoned children. I called it NONO. 12 adults work there and it is home and school for 65 children. And they don't just have to learn about the adult world. They must also learn to take care of each other. The next NONO will be bigger and will lie up between Warna Ridoubt and Sunbourne. It will also house a children's hospital. My father's family is from up there. - I probably haven't thought much about it myself. Sorry! Eutille.

- You owe me no explanation, Elno. It's just such a beautiful name. - He kisses my hand:

- Eutille! - you didn't say that by yourself. Now I know what an Emmaus friendship means.

- We were five children. I was number four and Nono was the youngest. My little sister. Two older brothers were named Nastiab and Urhtar. The oldest was our half-sister Ramia. She was a kind of extra mother to all of us. Read for us and with us. Taught us to live in a

forest. Collect berries and wild plants. Fixing things and looking after little people like me and Nono. Drive out dangerous animals. Ramia taught Nastiab and Urhtar how to shoot. And the three of them went hunting with father twice a year. Our dog was a large black labrador. His name was Fenris. Loved water. - The river took him. We lost a good playmate and protector.

"Did we meet any of them at the Blue Hall?" Trenson smiles a little at me before continuing:

- They are all gone, Eutille.

- It hurts me, I say and stroke him gently.

- It's been a long time now, but thank you for your participation! I was seven to eight years old, Nono only four. We lived in a cabin far to the south in the Valentine Forest. A place that slopes down towards the river. Father's name was Kinnoc. He was a marksman and forest supervisor. My mother, Sue, often worked as a midwife in the area. She also had to keep the family together. But we were often left to fend for ourselves. The nearest neighbors was four kilometers away.

Nono liked to wear a carnation colored hair bow and ditto finely knitted sweater. As Ramia had knitted her. She wore small yellow-dotted shoes, if she could find them. I taught her which berries to pick and how to pronounce her name: Nono Trenson. Not Nono Tenson, Nono! Try again!

"What's a Tenson, Elno?" said my little Nono. She trusted me blindly.

- Look! I said, freeing a dragon fly from a cobweb. It flew away and I said to Nono:

- That, is a Trenson!

Nono loved to dance while cheering and singing her own songs. Chirped like a yellow natina pirol:

"Look, we're flying! We're flying with our feet: *ihi du! ihi du! dudelio!* Look we're flying, Elno!"

Nono and I also went for short walks alone in the woods in good weather. Holding

hands. I made sure she didn't trip or hit herself. And one day we walked together like that. Her little hand fit into mine. Like an egg in a nest:

"Elno!"

- Yes, Nono.

- Now I'm inside you.

- I'll take care of you, Nono.

- Uta says we can't.

- Take care of you?

- Be inside - someone, Elno!

- I'm just holding your hand. Such! Then we won't be separated from each other.

- Ram says I have slept - inside mother.

- We all have that, I laughed.

- Father too?

- You can ask him, Nono.

- I want to sleep - inside you, Elno!

- We're not going to sleep now. We're going for a walk.

- I want to be inside you. Then you can always - go with me.

- Good, Nono. Never stay away! Then I will always go with you. - Nono said nothing, but her small hands held my hand up to her cheek. She looked at me with radiant eyes. We stopped and hugged each other. And a big brown bird flew over us.

I had planned to go in a circle. Down towards the river and to the left by the large sycamore tree. A road that goes around and away from the river again. We just had to turn once more when we reached a star of seven hunting trails. But that day we went wrong! And it was my fault, Eutille! My responsibility. There is no "but".

"Where do we live, Elno?" she said more and more. Her little legs had grown tired. And I became more and more insecure and afraid. Where were we? So great was my joy when I recognized a road and a house and the trees around. Now I knew how we got home.

- Was there no one who could help you, Uncle Elno?

- No, Eutille! Back then, the Valentine Forest was quite deserted. Except when there was "blue" hunting with horses and dogs. But suddenly we saw people. They drew long red ribbons across the road and between the trees. We tried to go under the tape, but they yelled, "QUADRAGINTA!" and pulled us away. We tried another place and now there was a big uproar. We were afraid of their canes and dogs and I tried to protect Nono. And it almost succeeded.

- Think, you were only children, Elno! Didn't you say you lived on the other side?

- I said who we were, but that didn't help us. We went back and I tried to comfort Nono. In the end we both cried. We didn't dare stay on the road, but slept in the woods. The next day I built a little shelter out of branches and twigs. Nono sat quietly and asked:

- When will mother come? Is she coming now - Elno? - We slept at night in the little hide and during the day I tried to get Nono to eat leaves and berries from the woods and drink water from a spring. But it all came up again. And the forest grew colder every day. I tried to warm her at night with my body. She asked no more, said nothing. I also tried to make her happy. But what should I say?

"Couldn't you go back to the people on the road and ask for help?"

- We didn't dare! Eutille. As you say yourself, we were only children. Didn't know they had actually saved us from going home. From being infected, Eutille. Everyone has been afraid of each other. Children no exception. And Nono could no longer walk. And I didn't dare leave her. No one heard my cries. Or didn't dare hear them. When I saw light and called, the light disappeared again. One day we lay down and froze. I held her close. We just looked into each other. And I could feel her disappear into herself and away. Her eyes suddenly went blank. Her breath caught in a small sigh. - I cried and shook her: "Breathe, Nono. Stay with me!" I cried. Shouted for help! Wanted awfully much to go with her. - Trenson tells it quietly and puts an arm around me:

- I don't know how long I lay there. I kissed my little sister. Buried her in the woods with my bare hands. Covered her with leaves, twigs, forest soil, and on top moss and rocks as best I could. And tied a cross. Lay there on my knees with bloody hands and had no more screams. - Elno and I sit quietly and hold each other. I feel so bad. Think, that I have

called forth all that sorrow and pain in him. Imagine if I had to ... But Trension calmly says:

- Since that day, I have never feared death. I need only mention Nono's name.

"But Elna, you found back? Or were found?" I almost whisper every word.

- Eutilla, no one survived the quadraginta. My whole family was buried in a common grave by our house. I only got there once. Then the house was sealed. Everything had been overgrown.

- It was the most difficult year of my life. But I deserved it all, Eutilla. In the end I just lay there looking forward to dying. When Master Bartos found me, there was not much left of me. He shouted:

"Stop! What's that down in the ditch? Not there, further down!" - From then on I was never alone. I heard again and again Puno: "Elna says that ... ". He immediately moved Nono back to our family, close to her mother. They got a big beautiful family stone with their names and a smaller one for little Nono. With her name and a dragon fly on the top.

Bartos burned our house and removed everything. Built a small chapel and campanile and cleared the surrounding woods to form a beautiful flowery memorial park overlooking the river. The park with a white marble statue of Nono, dancing. I have only seen it in pictures - The Trension Park. It makes me feel like living dead, Eutilla. - Miranda is the great love of my life. But I don't deserve her. I don't deserve to have children myself. I sincerely wish, that I stood in white marble and that it was Nono who lived. DO YOU HEAR ME GOD?

Two police officers greet us on the way out. The receptionist gives us permission to enter. She points: Dept. 3, room 8 is always on the right when you enter! And she's right. From the reception, the corridor leads to many rooms and clinics: Bed rooms and day rooms for the patients on the left. And various clinics, operating rooms, and miscellaneous depots and offices on the right. Room 8 is easy to find, because there is a male police officer sitting and reading. He gets up. Elna hands the officer something and

they whisper a little back and forth. We must write the position, name and time. 12:45 in a book: "Director Elno Trenson, Miss Eutille Lipatel." When the officer sees my name, he clicks heels together and salutes. He opens the door for us. A four-bed room, with Pollyanna nearest to the right. The bed opposite is empty. At the window are two other ladies. The lady on the left is lying with her back to us. She is badly injured, but she has not wanted to tell what has happened to her. The lady on the right is not very old. She has eaten something you cannot eat. She smiles shyly:

"Gdday, I, I'm Louna."

- Good morning Miss Louna! And get well soon, we say.

Pollyanna struggles to get up and sit. Elno helps her settle, and I get an unexpected real hug from her, and we kiss and hug each other for a surprisingly long time:

"Thank you, Eutille, they are beautiful!" - Elno goes for two vases, and I say:

- The tall rose is from me, the others are from the police headquarters.

"Thank you, you must have!"

- And I guess the red ones on your table are from Noah, I whisper. Pollyanna nods, struggling a little not to cry. And succeed in it. Elno is back with a tall narrow and a smaller vase for the small bouquet from him:

- and sweet treats for a sweet patient! he says.

- Thank you Trenson, you are a good person!

- You look better now, Pollyanna. It will be nice, I say and caress her face. An ugly wound that forms a wide bluish-red wound strip diagonally across the face. - Pollyanna reaches for the mirror:

"I look like someone who fell from the second floor." The mirror replies without it being visible on Pollyanna:

"You promised we wouldn't talk about it!" - Elno goes down and takes her bound right hand:

"What's happened here, Miss Pollyanna?"

- Damaged a nail and a finger. I didn't want them to take my ring. Pollyanna raises her left hand, showing that it is empty. Dimas said yesterday that they are looking for it. - She is

fighting with herself again, and we comfort her. She gets a handkerchief for her eyes and says encouragingly:

- The doctors think it will probably be fine again, as long as I keep my right hand clean and it gets air. She cheers a smile at us. Elna stands up:

- Miss Pollyanna, Above all, you should remember to be angry with me, Director Elna Tresson, and with my boss Master ... Pollyanna grabs Elna: "What's the use? Neither you nor Master Bartos could have prevented what happened!" And then I can't do it anymore, I cry:

"Pollyanna, we all know whose fault it was! That it was mine, Eutelle's, and nobody else's!" Pollyanna looks on Louna and whispers:

- Let's go out into the day room. Then we can argue further there.

"Can you go?" I snivel in amazement. Pollyanna smiles a little:

- No, but I can simulate steps in long courses if I get a little help. You can hold one arm each, I don't have more. - Pollyanna comes up, puts on a white housecoat and she walks between us with small uncertain steps:

"When I get up I feel dizzy, But remember: I feel much better than yesterday." The officer outside follows, and says to Pollyanna:

- You are welcome to talk to other patients and visitors, but not about yourself or your sisters. Not even on this matter! You must refer to the police if anyone asks. And you must keep us informed of what happens!

- Thank you, Mr Officer! says Pollyanna, and to us: Yoko was here this morning. How happy I was to cry quietly with her. She brought fruit for me. And we alternately ate and cried silently. In the end, we couldn't remember what we were crying about, and then we both rested. It has strengthened me in a way. - There were a couple of officers before you came. They wanted to borrow a tuft of my hair and asked if I could do just 12 questions. Later we do a real interrogation. I have to be careful what I say to strangers.

We put Pollyanna in the nearest day room. Being quite a living room. There is only one elderly man sitting at one of the other tables. He sits with his back to us, reading and

drinking a cup of tea. He is wearing the same white housecoat. The officer remains standing. Trension kisses Pollyanna's bad hand and says softly:

- I'm not allowed to be here, but Noah will come back this evening and take over. Maybe it will be me who drives? - Master Bartos has asked me to say that if you lack anything, I must give it to you. No matter what it costs. Pollyanna straightens up:

- How thoughtful you are in everything. But you know very well what my sisters and I want, regardless of the price. - Elna carefully places her hand:

- If you had gotten it, you wouldn't be here. - And he bows and leaves, but not before I have given him a 1st degree Emmaus hug. Pollyanna puts her hands together in thanks and smiles shaking her head. - The officer sits down at another table.

A nurse in a green coat, Miss Iris, walking by. And Pollyanna signs:

"Is there any news of the lady, Mrs Abello, who came in with me?"

"We're not admitted to talk about her. So I'm not allowed to tell how she is doing." smiles Iris, and winks at Pollyanna:

"Would you like a cup of tea too, Miss?" and Pollyanna happily nods back, and spills her joy out onto me giving me a big hug.

After a long pause, she looks at me seriously and we whisper together:

"Yoko says you were there at the shed where Cona and I lay. You risked your life for me, Eutille. It's horrible to think about!"

- I was very scared, Pollyanna, but also very proud to help find you. Pollyanna looks through me and tells:

We lay there helpless, neither wet nor dry, Eutille. In the morning they came to see if Cona was still alive. Or if we should be drugged more. They locked the door again and we could hear them discussing outside the shed. Lupo Zimnat growled:

"Am I the only adult here? They've sent me an expensive helper. You've ruined two good deals in a short space of time and many days' of work is just gone. Damn good deals right to the dustbin. Bejaan Moorkhata! If you know what that means, where you are from?"

Porka Bosaventus grunted:

- We were promised a third man. A third man and a closed carriage. Two men are not enough. Everyone says so!

- Then, that was not what we could get. And Naleb was shadowed, so we couldn't use him as a third man. - it came from Zimnat, irritated.

- But, what now! What do we do Mr Professor?

- They just have to go away. They must not "sing" in the court. We have to start all over again.

- Away where, how? Hummed Porka.

- How? or are you just stupid? - Follets of course, and fast!

- Follets?

- Yes, you don't live here. Feux Follets!

- Aha! Folly Follets, now I'm in.

- Yes, my friend, to the Lantern Men on a one-way ticket.

- We can use Dexter to get them out there.

- No no, make no mistakes now! Toc Senior and his people! They know their stuff and have what it takes. Know it all. But they are not for free, Mr Baron! - It's too bright now. Pick them up before tonight, Porka. And wait for my signal when Naleb reports a free lane!

"You promised that I would . . ."

- If you want to bang them, do it now. We're getting busy!

- Don't you want to?

- I lost mine, when I was going to take one of the small soft tas..

- Can you do that?

- Stupid again? Take care of your own shit, and I'll take care of mine!

- I'll do it! Just take a bath first. -

- And Porka! It was not my intention to ...

I could not even cry, Eutille. They had given up selling me and Cona, and now we knew what that meant. - There was only the light that came in through cracks in the wall. Cona

had been conscious. I so wanted to comfort her as we lay together and waited. Confused and distraught. We didn't even know where we were. But I couldn't speak. Then I tried to sing to Cona: "All grapes carry a secret". But no, couldn't sing either. Tried to whistle. Think Tille, I could! Then I lay there and whistled for her. And now she lay unconscious with her eyes closed - and then a smile came. The smallest smile I've seen. She smiled at me! Oh God! I had nothing else to give her.

Later I lay and whistled together with some macaw birds somewhere outside. Could hear voices. And suddenly a bang, loud shouts, shots and bright lights. And thought goodbye forever, Yoko and Tille, and don't wake up dear Cona. Let's get this over quickly! - But when we were carried up to the road, it occurred to me: Maybe we were free? Back among ordinary people. Back in the same air you and Yoko breathe. And up through the mists I saw you in a red shirt and dreamed that you comforted me. Only when Noah came, did I dare to believe that I was safe! And that you were right there. Now they couldn't take us back! Sorry, Eutille, my head was all wrong inside!

Pollyanna is crying quietly and I move close to her and feel a key and a number 8 tag stuck in her housecoat. It feels nice to hold each other again. No, it feels wonderfully nice to be very close to Pollyanna. My Pollyanna! - I wipe her eyes and comfort her as best I can. Whispering to her about the trip here, and my conversations with Elnó Trenson:

- maybe there is hope, I say.

- We still belong to Master Bartos, sighs Pollyanna quietly.

- But Pollyanna, we must never ever lose the hope!

- It's just so difficult, Eutille. After what has happened! What happened - or what didn't happen. If Noah - if Noah can no longer believe in me. Or if he doesn't dare marry me.

Then I am finished both as a woman and as a person.

"You're not done!" Pollyanna looks at me wetly, presses herself close to me and whispers:

- Eutille, I am still a virgo, still a virgin. But that doesn't help me.

- Pollyanna! You are my Pollyanna. How could I ever...

- No human being can help me without being affected by my misfortune. You are the

sweetest person in my life, Eutille. - Don't make me protect you from myself. How I love you though! And she cries quietly.

Keeping close to Pollyanna, I slowly slide down. Everything closes quietly around me. The light comes from below. And unreality opens up to me, welcomes me. Protecting me. Comforting me and blowing me full of warm sonority. Like bao sound or deep organ tones. Something is forgotten and gone for me, but I still have the joy. Below, yes, deep beneath me, a large piece of sky has rolled out. Two huge colossi stand there back to back! Then they approach with heavy steps. Huge santu stones with large human heads. Now they are in a triangle with me. The one offers a large piece of idolum. The other hands me a large bouquet of roses. But I can't reach them. Beckoning them closer. I am the opposite of afraid, the reverse of fear. Realizing I don't need it anymore. Hearing my own laughter approaching - it embraces me: ihi du! Crying with joy.

Pollyanna kisses me awake. The elderly man reads some small cards and sips his tea. Sometimes he gets hurt and bends down for several seconds, and seems relieved when he straightens up. Smiling apologetically. Pollyanna tries one:

"If you're better off alone?" The man shakes his head with his hand flat on the table:

- I think you have it worse than me. And your large family is a blessing to you.

- If you want, can we sit at the same table? says Pollyanna, waving her bad hand. - Iris is back with a tray. A teapot and three cups, and three pieces of braided bread with olive oil and a little chutney, as well as three small plates and ditto small knives. The man smiles and bows:

- As long as I'm not a nuisance. - He sits down across from us. I can see that his small cards have numbers and letters on both sides. He puts the cards into a small book with drawings and blank pages. - The police officer gets a glass of water and a newspaper.

We all say thank you and divide it between us. There is some coming and going through the living room, but otherwise it feels quiet. Two patient ladies in white housecoats appear. One goes with an elongated package. The other carries a pot of flowers. But they

move on to another room when they see the officer. There are theater posters on the walls. On one of them you can see a woman in a green dress smashing an hourglass with her shoe. It's hard to take your eyes off it. There is also other things to look at. On the windowsill is a spherical aquarium with some green aquatic plants and with red and blue fish. The ball changes color in the light depending on which fish are present. Outside the large windows, there is a lot of greenery interrupted by beautiful round flower pots, low ornamental trees and empty benches. - No, there is actually a man sitting on a bench. In a talar robe with grey bands. Bareheaded and dark haired. He must be able to see us clearly, but looks away when I look at him. Moves his right hand slightly as if talking to someone. But I don't see anyone else out there. The officer is reading his newspaper, but out of the corner of his eye he keeps a sight on the man. After a while, he slowly folds the newspaper. A nurse takes it as she walks by. And suddenly the man on the bench is gone!

I also notice that the older man at our table wears a silver moon on a necklace. No ring or other jewelry. And he has a tired face with ugly scars. The nose and mouth have also got theirs. The hair is grey, almost white, and appears very thin. The voice also seems thin and yet sonorous. And he clearly knows what he wants to say and how. The man raises his teacup towards us:

"Sanitas!" We also raise ours: "Sanitas!"

- What does it mean? I whisper to Pollyanna.

- It means "Health", says the man, and you could probably use a couple of large cups of that. Have you fallen off the horse? - Pollyanna waves her hand:

- No, I dropped my shoe! Pretty violent ... was admitted to ... The officer has stood up. In fact, I'm not allowed to talk to strangers about myself! The officer sits down again.

Pollyanna continues:

- Have you been here long? - The man sets down his cup:

- I have noticed that you are visited by the police, and you do not need to tell about yourself either. It suits me fine. I am actually only alive because my enemies never knew who I was. And no! I came in here with severe pain. Things are going better now. They're trying to figure out what is the matter. Or rather, what isn't.

Pollyanna dips her bread into the tea and sips it:

"Actually, I need to think about other people than myself. You must stop me if I fall into it!"

"Thank you," says the man: You can call me whatever you want. I called myself Jack Wood where I worked.

- You can call me "Jun" or whatever you want, I say: as long as I can call you Mr Wood. He laughs and leans back:

"There you got me Miss Jun!" He has to lean forward again with his eyes closed, it's not good! - until he is ready again. Pollyanna says:

"Perhaps you should go in and rest, Mr Wood?"

- No, no, if you can put up with me, I can continue. It is the first time in many years that I speak to reasonable people in my mother tongue. You have no idea how nice it feels, Miss ...?

- Call me - "Miss Wood", Mr Wood, says Pollyanna, smiling her smile.

- Thank you, we say so! And you, Miss Jun, says Jack Wood - You must stop me if I talk too much about my own. Forgive me, I haven't done that in many years. It's usually quite imprudent where I come from, he laughs.

24. The Palace of Saubagol

I have drunk a good deal of tea and eaten half my bread, but Pollyanna has scarcely begun. And Jack Wood is also struggling. A nurse, Miss Silence, comes and checks some things with him and leaves again. Pollyanna seems wide awake:

"Where do you come from, Mr Jack Wood?"

- From a very large city, Saubagol in the country of Libasara. It is located in a desert, but where the groundwater is only 15 meters down for part of the year. The city is surrounded by mountains on three sides which are passable via good passes. Since ancient times, Saubagol has been an oasis that has only grown and grown. It is a crossroads of many caravan routes.

The police officer is replaced by a female officer, whom we salute. And who admonishes Pollyanna about what she can and can't do.

- Call me "Avery", she says, and sits closer to us. And a third nurse Miss Light comes and walks around a bit with Pollyanna. Miss Iris also comes in with a bowl of fruit for us. Pollyanna thanks for the fruit and sits a little quietly with me and is in pain. Then she asks:

"Mr Jack Wood, You worked in a desert town?"

- Saubagol is quite a city. And yes, every morning we got sun-baked bread and well water. And got our chains on our feet so we could better walk without running. And so we did, not either. It was several kilometers to the quarry in the mountains. - Mr Wood pulls up and shows us his feet, and I hide with Pollyanna, eyes closed.

- Yes, it's not nice, Miss Jun. We most walked in barefeet. I did that too when my sandals were worn out. On the trip I went and practiced what things were called in the many languages we spoke. It was easy to find a way but difficult to walk it, because those who fell were to stay lying down. No one was allowed to help them. "Souls gain wings, the rest wither!" We whispered to each other up and down the ranks.

Mr Wood continues:

- At night I lay and imagined that I was with my children. I dreamed strange dreams that they were close without me being able to reach them. Remember to pray for your children if you have any! I have no idea where mine is. Whether they are alive or dead. -Pollyanna puts her arms around me:

"Were the other workers your age, or were there also children?" - Jack Wood sips an apple before thoughtfully continuing:

- Boys and men of all ages worked in the quarry. Not so few older than me. But one of my best friends was probably around 18 years old. - Jack Wood must stop again before he can go on:

- He came from the Pelican Coast far away. He sounded like a child playing with a cupboard, opening and closing it all the time. The first time we spoke, he looked at me

like a child eagerly asking for an apple, and kept saying:

Fio(click)ma, fio(click)ma" So after that I always called him Fioma, which amused him greatly. He quickly became a sort of adopted son to me. It started with us hiding smaller stones that weighed the same. Then we sat together and juggled when the last day parade was over.

If Fioma had been hurt or beaten, I could hold a hand over the spot and with closed eyes say: "Sanitas Fioma" which gave him stomach cramps with laughter. Later, someone else who knew several languages told me that what I said sounded like an insult. When I had problems, Fioma would point to the place where I was hurting, and sing with closed eyes and a blissful smile. It sounded so beautiful and healthy to me. After some time we could talk quite a bit together with words from various other languages. And if one of us found edible plants, we hid them, to later share them with each other. And his group helped me where they could. And mine helped Fioma as best they could.

Fioma believed that most lasted less than a year. "The quarry eats its children," they said. If you lasted two years, you could rise through the ranks and perhaps survive. A few months later, one evening he was not with us when we went back. I never saw him again. I later learned that Fioma had been punished for singing the forbidden butterfly song. So yes, there were children - big boys. There were many and they didn't last long. Losing Fioma was a hard blow, but I decided not to give up. Escape was hopeless. So I chose to move up the ranks. For my children's sake! And to avenge my adopted son.

We cut stones out of the mountain with hammer and chisel, and loaded them into a wagon on rails. Many small quick blows exactly in the eye line so that the shard jumped away from the eyes. Still, every now and then you hit yourself in the face. And what the shard did not take, the sun burned. Jack Wood laughs: we came to look like each other! He leans forward. Not in pain, but to eat his braided bread:

I threw the stones in the cart and we pushed it around to a place called "Commo" - and

we unloaded there for fine sorting. Most stones were cut and used in one of the many buildings and for roads. - But in Commo, raw jewelry stones, small or larger, were regularly found. Rarely really big. Then the work was called off and we were replaced by the jewelry people in red overalls and signum glasses. And with tools and all their vessels, salt and slings. Maybe there were more big ones? While I was there we found a desert amethyst that was roughly the size of a coconut. They sanded it down from grey to brown. And from brown to red and on to clear amethyst. Then it was like an apple - I take courage:

"Mr Wood, did you find any yourself?"

- No, and I didn't look for them either. You are not thirsty when you are drowning. We cut ordinary stones out of the mountain, some harder than others. - So to rise a little in the ranks, I started sorting the stones I threw in the cart into fine stones and good stones; at each end of the wagon. And I always put my tools down in exactly the same place, and in exactly the same way. It did not escape the attention of our big foreman Caius Ten. And I had fewer bruises when we went home in the evening. He was otherwise good at hitting. Both with stones or his foreman cane. He could yell:

"VITE, VITE, are you snail or human?" while he pricked sore spots on one's body. And then came the blow! Hard and precise. Sometimes he couldn't stop beating and shouting something like: "nighty-naughty-nubbin?" But if Caius Ten shouted, "Bal-dri-an!" - we all knew he would go on till death. - Many got bruises or open wounds, and every day fewer came home than went out. Either due to accidents or exhaustion, or due to abuse. But every day there were also new ones coming in.

- This is how some years went by, when I did the best I could, and was not, or almost not, beaten, kicked, or had stones thrown at me. One day when we were ready to leave, a man appeared in a white, red and blue uniform with gold buttons and a kind of lantern in his belt. He carried a riding whip and spoke to Caius Ten. Ten pointed his cane down at me. And I thought: either it all ends here for me, or ...

I was beckoned forward and the ankle chain was taken off. Caius said:

- This is our honorable Palace Intendant Mr Falzon Tremelius. Don't say anything unless you're asked, Jack! - They walked up to the palace with me between them. - Jack Wood eats a banana and drinks some more cold tea. He seems to enjoy that meal.

"I'm not sleeping," I claim. Pollyanna is all for it:

- go on, Mr Wood! there is nothing so exciting as tribulation that is past!

- You are right, Miss Wood, - he is enjoying himself royally, but has to go down again and take the count with a pain trip. Drinking a little again. Wipes his mouth and goes on: They took me in through the palace park. A parterre garden with beautiful iconic beds. Shallow basins with blue bottoms. Tall figurative fountains. The paths were angular and freshly torn in two colors of gravel. At a point they led me to a rather large and much deeper basin with an accompanying terrarium. A tasteful feature in the beautiful palace park:

"These caimans have never eaten anything but human flesh. There's a lot of them, so they're always hungry. You'll never come back to the quarry, Jack. If we can't use you up at the palace, we'll ask them here if they want you!"

Jack Wood adds: They would scare me. Were not empty threats. I myself have never wanted to torment other people. But when I stood there and the name Fioma came to mind, for the first time in my life I felt the pure unadulterated hatred. Hate against those who killed him. And with three years in the commando troops from the young years, I knew exactly how to knock Mr Foreman Caius Ten, and our honorable Palace Intendant Mr Falzon Tremelius, into the basin without getting wet myself. - But I also knew that it was not part of my plan. I lowered my head and nodded. And Caius pushed me with his foot in the direction of the palace. - Pollyanna with hand over mouth:

"Did you experience anyone being thrown into that pool?"

- No, never. But I sometimes heard heartbreaking screams in the direction of the basin. - He must go down, supports his forehead in his left hand before he can continue: We walked in silence for some time, with me in the middle, and ended up in a low annex where the roof was made of clear glass. I was pulled and pushed in and down. Down into

what turned out to be a workshop for mosaic workers in colored glass or tiles.

- At the end, a large oven. On the walls are boards with tools, a torch and templates for mosaic work. Next to the entrance, a bookcase with different rolls of adhesive paper, and with soldering water, cleaning water, flux and colours. At the other end, a large bookcase with rolls of tin and lead, and other joint elements. And with a myriad of different flasks, blowpipes, flat glass in all colors and balls blown in clear glass. - On the floor a hand fan and a thin transport plate with mirrored adhesive paper and attached parts of a work, as well as a desk with a smaller transport plate which had some loose glass fragments that matched the mosaic on the floor. I could find it all on one of the posters on the wall. - At both ends of the workshop, high under the ceiling, I could see two wind-driven room fans.

Jack Wood continues:

- My father always told me: "Wherever you go, suck it, get it in your hands! And be generous yourself in helping others." I sent him a loving thought!

"MAKE THESE PARTS!" commanded the intendant, showing me his riding whip, and nodding to the three white smocks who worked there. They came closer, dried their hands, and gave me some things which I put on the desk. I also put on a smock. Hung mosaic pliers in place on the wall, and instead took wheel pliers, which are more accurate. Found soldering tools and materials and laid them out in a ring according to when they were to be used. Put on soldering goggles and got down to business. I checked the poster, the pieces of glass on the adhesive paper, and cut with the pliers. Prepared my "tickets", as the pieces of glass are called. Fixed them exactly where they should be. Turned on the burner. Preheated and soldered point by point my tickets and lead rungs, which hold it all together. - It was completely quiet around me. When I was done, I hung everything in place and nodded to Intendant Falzon Tremelius and got into pipe position. Caius Ten waved the three working in the workshop over to check my soldering. But they found nothing to complain about. The Intendant looked disappointed, Caius Ten looked annoyed. They spun around and left, locking the door securely behind them.

But they were probably not completely dissatisfied, because after the end of the working day I was lodged in a room with one of the mosaic workers:

- call me: "Snurre" - he said, and: Where did you learn to solder?

Finally I could sleep at night. And I could get a real cold water bath from a hose. I could wash my clothes. And we also got fruit for breakfast. And I have to admit I enjoyed it. I couldn't work freely for myself, but after all: I worked with something I could.

A bespectacled doctor with middle-parted dark hair comes in to see Pollyanna. He walks a bit sideways as he and I support her into an empty office. He takes off the lorgnette and asks her name, bed room, and how she thinks she is. - Pollyanna feels much better, but also has pain when she walks, stands or sits down. And she's still dizzy when she walks. He looks at her left leg and right hand. He puts the lorgnette back on and takes her pulse, feels around her face and presses several places on her back, asking if it hurts. He listens to her lungs and she has to take a deep breath and say "cortus" several times. She is given some white pills and a glass of water. We follow her back, and I'm about to ask the doctor what cortus means when I see the card on his white coat: Dr. Jianguo Cortus.

When we come back, dinner has been laid out for Jack Wood and for Pollyanna. Pollyanna gives me some of her food and Jack Wood does the same. And we smile at each other and eat together. Pollyanna leans forward and says softly:

- The doctors say that I should probably recover. But that I have to train. And that I must also remember to rest. But I won't have any peace if I don't know how it went for you, Mr Wood! I wish you all the best!

"And so am I!" it comes from me. Jack Wood smiles:

- If you ladies are real angels, put on your wings. And your halos, if it's not too windy. And fly me back to when my wife was alive. I know she's gone, but I can kind of imagine she's still with me. I can sometimes hear her voice and laughter. When I need it most. I do

now. Very clear. - Pollyanna laughs and hugs me:

- Mr Wood, unfortunately we do not know what we ourselves are. With all that you have experienced, perhaps you can take us back to where your adventurous experiences continue? Mr Wood, nodding:

- As you like, but stop me immediately you want to get into bed and rest! - He continues:

When I wasn't wearing a white smock, I had to wear a green garment that showed what job and rank I had. And besides, I was no longer beaten! After a few years I was appointed manager, and was responsible for all maintenance and all installation of new mosaics in tiles or glass in the beautiful palace and other important buildings. I was awarded the title of decoration master. And got two workshops under me, with a total of 10 men. I had to collaborate with five other masters of building crafts, and we were all under the same direction and responsibility of Mr Palace Intendant Falzon Tremelius.

I was given a green and white uniform and free access inside and outside the palace in an official capacity. I received drawings and descriptions of everything that had to be done, and I was paid what I needed to purchase materials and use extra labor. And I had the authority to move freely around Saubagol city on official errands. However, always accompanied by a court servant, officer or other high-ranking person. If things could not be obtained there in the city, I had to go to the port city of Ismata. Where in due time I came ashore in chains with NT7413 burned into my left shoulder. Mr Wood uncovers his left shoulder and shows us his brand. - I just had to order travel with a suitable carriage and horses back and forth. That is, with coachman and horses in pair. With two servants to help me, and two mounted policemen to look after us. In addition, I got my own palace apartment with two rooms, work desk, bell string for the servants, bathroom, toilet, and with a view of the palace park. I could get real meals delivered, or eat with other officials in a building we called the cubis - an appendix to the palace. Beautiful outside as well as inside. Was formerly a horse stable for guardsmen on duty. In the cubis there was a jovial, comradely tone. But beneath the surface lurked the raw jealousy.

And I was given authority higher than e.g. foreman Caius Ten! He would always bow to me and say: "Honorable Mr Decoration Master Jack Wood." - Jack Wood laughs out loud, but it turns into a cough. And he must go down and up again: My bed with a flowery canopy, and gold-framed mirror over a bedside cabinet with exquisite things. Not least Libasara's national drink siticali, which unfortunately I will never taste again. In Ismata's nightlife, the drink went by the name Sabina kiss. A word that was otherwise "deposited". A meaningless word! In my living room there was a neat little desk. On it was always a sheet of djema with the day's list of deposited words. Written in elaborate script, and brought by the servants. I practiced not using deposited words. But once one of my glass people stood high and cut himself badly. I yelled, "Help him down!". And down he came, that's clear. But several minutes passed before anyone dared to make eye contact with me. I had used a deposited word! When I got home to my palace apartment, I laid flowers under the legally required picture of the King. Feared the worst. But no one had reported me. - I'm ashamed of it. A poor coward! Pollyanna's nimble hand glides across the table:

"It won't go any further, you have to believe that! You have neither shame nor guilt."

- You are brave! I say encouragingly. Mr Wood continues:

- It must be what it wants. But no pay, no freedom. I was not allowed to go up into the mountains, or to other cities and places. I was not allowed to receive visitors without permission. I belonged to King Argento Amoroso. Among people called "Amo", said with raised index finger. And his Queen Notobia Modesto Olivarius. They were free to use me or throw me away like a worn out kitchen item.

But I was also human, and I missed my blessed wife and my children. I found everything else moving, but that point stood still: my family. And I had a plan. A plan that, if revealed, could lead to me being burned alive in the main square of Saubagol. Much to the amusement of the King's subjects. In the presence of His Majesty King Amo and Queen Notopia.

"You don't mean that!" says Pollyanna startled. Jack Wood shrugs:

- The collective joy at a person's misfortune is a legacy from the ancient Romans. A day

of celebration where the traitor Jack Wood got his deserved punishment, like many before him: Die, according to tradition, tied to the top of a frumpy dump of combustibles. The Caimans would be cheated. - But on the other hand, a plan which, if successfully carried out, would cause serious problems for the powers that had abused and mistreated me. Who had taken my family from me and killed my friends.

My control signature "peracta J.W." will be engraved in countless places where I have repaired, worked or had responsibility. Everywhere in the huge mosaic works and window sections, tiles inside and out, up and down. In stucco and decorations in walls and ceilings, all kinds of glass, tools and work papers. My little signature will irrevocably be part of the light that hits King Amo and Queen Notopia wherever they go. Yes, where court, staff, servants and guards move! Small dangerous sparks of freedom that whisper: *"He did it!"*

Pollyanna pushes her plate forward a little, and leans back:

"Was there no one at all that you could trust?"

- I could fully trust the dead. But it would be gambling to put one's fate in the hands of the living. Unfortunately, there was a lot of peaching, which you couldn't suspect anyone of. And we also knew, bitterly enough, that some of us were secret informers in the regent's service. But never who. If I told about myself, it could cost me dearly. So, I composed a beautiful fairy tale about Jack Wood. No one thought otherwise of me. Not even Fioma.

We were always a few steps from the border between life and death. Not that I myself informed against anyone, nor did I ever punish anyone. But I had to be extra careful and patient. My plan was nowhere. I hadn't so much as hinted that I had a plan to return - to be me. Be myself through thick and thin. On the contrary. I toiled at it, high and low. I waited for my chance. And I was patient.

"You would steal your own freedom from the thief, Mr Wood?" it comes from Pollyanna.

- Yes, Miss Wood, turn right the scale of life! if you got it. - Little by little I built up a secret fortune. Not through embezzlement. Not by stealing. But by selling usable things

that were discarded. Cloth, glass, tiles, furniture. Kept some of the money where only I could find it. I sewed a set of clothes myself from cheap hemp canvas. And I sewed 4 gold ducats into the lapel as an extra reserve.

Jack Wood goes further:

- I bought a good straight lump of the heavy batalina wood. And cut from it a slender, strong staff. Point at both ends. Two meters long. It was to be my only protection against evil people and dangerous animals. I learned to use it in Praetorium many years ago. Lions have been killed with one like that. I hid the staff behind the palace park in Canis Major. A large thicket guarded only by biting guard dogs. But dogs who knew me. And knew that I had always a little for them.

- To blur my work, I cut some small figures from the excess wood. Put them in a place where they could see me and I them. They were also my eyes when I was not at home. Therefore I knew that it was not the servants who had ransacked my lodging twice. The ground began to burn under my feet!

Jack Wood drinks the rest of his tea and smiles familiarly at us. A smile that says more than words and that doesn't send him down in pain. He continues:

- I took some sandals that a servant couldn't use himself and a shirt that had also been thrown away. Everything was ready in a place where no one came, and there was nothing that immediately connected the contents to me. My plan was very uncertain, but it was the best plan I could think of. To be another poor man wandering. An outcast that no one bothered to look at. One who lived on handouts and who was at one with where he was.

- My dear Miss Wood, and you Miss Jun! I wish I could tell you that all my plans were good. That they put on their best clothes and said good morning to the world. But it didn't work out that way. And it never goes as you think. - Both Pollyanna and I are there at once:

"Why wasn't the escape plan safe enough?"

Jack Wood has had a glass of water and thought a little about:

- Because you can be lucky sometimes, but you can't be lucky every time. There were large bounties for ordinary citizens to report suspicious persons.

And besides, my plan was delayed. The volcano Gonobe erupted! It is located some distance from Saubagol in the northeast. In the steep mountain range Avertellerne. So Gonobe didn't threaten the big city directly. But the wind came from that edge when it opened and started to smoke. And a state of emergency was called. This meant that everyone had to stay where they were. The soldiers were in combat uniform and there were gendarmes everywhere.

"Well, if it wasn't dangerous to the city?" I ask.

- My dear Miss Jun, there are historical reasons for this. In the past, King Amo's father ruled. The cruel King Baldrian. Baldrian ruled with fire and blood. Was almost as feared as the son. No one and nothing could threaten Baldrians power. And yet he was felled by a banal trifle: a valpopok! A volcano cloud in the sky.

- Sorry, Mr Jack Wood, dream or reality? Pollyanna smiles sweetly.

- I don't play with that sort of thing, Miss Wood! The volcano Gonobe is not something to joke with. It also broke out long before I had the honor of being captured, that is, during the time under King Baldrian. Gonobe then grew and surrounded itself with fire.

Scattered valpopoks all over eastern Libasara. A large valpopok moved slowly over Saubagol. It took shape like a human - in an inappropriate way. Sat and pressed there in the sky. Slowly turned and stood up as its head grew. And there above the middle of the palace, everyone, rich and poor, recognized the features of "their beloved King": King Baldrian hovered above them, saw everything!

But the warm palace air wanted it differently. Pulled him up, so to speak. His body grew longer and thinner, and his head took shape like a child's drawing. A worried vegetable's smile.

- Couldn't the King just be indifferent to that? I think.

- If there's anything Kings can't do, it's just that, Miss Jun. But the people thronged

everywhere, enjoyed themselves royally. Slapped themselves on their stomachs laughing. A wave of laughter from happy cheering people! With or without uniform, with or without weapons. Forgive me, but that's how it happened. Believe it if you will, Ladies!

- Time has a habit of passing. And my courage grew with time. The year after the state of emergency, my plan was clearly visible to my inner gaze:

1.

The plan was to wait for south- to westerly winds and poor visibility weather. It rarely was.

2.

Checking out from the palace in my uniform accompanied by a court servant. Take a walk in Saubagol downtown to see if everything was as it used to be - and be seen there. Check in again at the palace.

3.

At night, tore to pieces one of my two uniforms and my one left shoe, with what could be teeth marks from the caimans. Stain clothes and shoes with my blood and erase all traces. Leaving the palace in the clothes I had prepared, exactly when the "dog guard" time changes with the "day guard". Knowing that the palace staff and halberdiers will all be very concerned with a proper changing of the guard punctually on four. I will "forget" to check out, sneak down to the caiman basin and throw the pieces of my uniform and the left shoe into the water; and leave the other, right shoe, on the path above. Mind you, without anyone seeing it.

4.

Move out through Canis Major and take my staff. And further along a discreet route through Saubagol. By that time, the servants have found my apartment empty, and the guard drags the rod seine into the caiman basin, hoping to find me there. That will extend

my lead.

5.

Go unseen towards the mountains and reach the pass at the Three Bird Rock after it gets light. The weather will erase all my traces, while the gendarmes comb Saubagol city and with notices calling for an evading decoration master!

6.

Go singing through the pass to a deep echo gorge:

I am dreaming I'm a butterfly
searching for rare flowers.

I am dreaming the Earth has disappeared
I touch down in the hand of my own.

I am dreaming the dream is reality.
I am dreaming I'm me.

7.

Eat some brought fruit. Go west on the north side of the mountains where there are fewest robbers, but without crossing the border to the north and being hanged as a spy. - They are now sending out three cavalry squadrons to find me. Almost a thousand eyes! You can't ride on the narrow, winding mountain paths I follow, and you can't see far ahead either. The mountains are the last place you look for refugees. I know they usually look first on the desert roads and in the port city of Ismata. It should very much give me a slight advantage. I hope to reach the coast further north in time before King Amo's dreaded dragoons!

8.

Arrive the fishing village, Hynidi, which is just south of the border and thus still in King Amo's land of Libasara. And arrive at a time when the last fishermen are getting ready to sail their morning haul. Buy a fisherman to immediately sail me in a fair half wind to the small town of Bindius on the island of Talan. Talan belongs to the mountain country of Ilinokium. The mosaic workshops often buy tala green from there on the market in Ismata. A color that gives the glass a delicate crystal green tone. And the fishermen tend to land a lot of fish precisely on Talan. I will pay the fisherman two bags of 300 denti each, a total equal to one and a half times what a good catch would bring in on Talan. But not without talking a lot about the price first. 300 now - the rest when we land. - The fishermen must not suspect me! I tell them a story about my boat sinking under me and that I am going to Talan to get a better boat. A story that is at the same time very right and very wrong. - Pollyanna and I hug hands under the table. We dare not look at each other. Jack Wood continues:

9.

I will arrive at Bindius and hike up to the Mum Nokotus Monastery. Now I do not appear poor, but clothed in mourning for the loss of my family. Wash me and eat there. My escape will then be the main topic of conversation in both Saubagol and Ismata.

10.

Donate a reasonable sum to the monastery, making me half way a monastery novice. But King Amo's secret agents, the dreaded "Kvividents", must have already landed along the coast of Ilinokium where I am. They must see me, yes, but not recognize me. It is the difficult art! I tell Father Abbot Quintus at the monastery that I must go on, "follow my calling". It is at the same time completely right and completely wrong! I will then buy a novice habit in the monastery, and they will refuse to accept the money. I am told to give them to the poor on my way. In the habit, I will wander unnoticed to the somewhat larger port town of Mortimas. Accompanied by two collect monks from the Mum Nokotus Monastery. We will talk to each other about Romans 8:38. I and the monks will look like each other and bless each other. And I want to buy myself on the first departure with a

good ship home. Wave goodbye to the monks. Farewell to Mortimas, Talan and Ilinokium. Farewell to King Amo's Kvididents, Ismata, Saubagol and Libasara. Wave goodbye to myself, and find myself. Stand at sea in the insatiable sea and - lands in my own hands. Home! Home! Home!

Somewhere we hear the sound of glass being dropped. The aquarium in the window sill changes to red light that spreads in the room. Pollyanna almost whispers:

"And then came the weather you could use, Mr Wood?"

- Yes, it came. The weather forecast at the palace on Wednesday called for fresh wind and rain mist. I followed my plan. Visited the city with a wordy valet, Mr Glen Bawty. Took care of my work routines. At night I did the things I had prepared and went to bed. Couldn't sleep but lay listening to the night sounds of the palace. The whoosh of the wind and the hoot of the owl. Voices and steps, jingling keys and doors being opened and closed. But sometimes the worst: the veiled silence! A palace where a King and Queen must be served never sleeps. I had an inexplicable feeling that someone had guessed my plan and was waiting for me. Yes, that somewhere in my plan there was a fatal misunderstanding.

Precisely the bugles blew the four o'clock signal! The change of guard had sounded. Remember, it was still pitch black night! With trembling hands I put on my own set of clothes. Collected my torn uniform and shoes and the bag with some fruit and other things. Sneaked off from my palace lodging which I locked behind me. Whispered goodbye to a bat. Avoiding the servants' corridors so as not to be seen, instead walking along the walls of the dark halls along a planned route. I shouldn't meet anyone there when the guard shift was called. But in the yellow knight's hall, the "Citrin Hall", I had to hide headlong from two courtiers. They appeared out of nowhere! I then stood completely still behind a heavily armed statue of King Amo's father: King Baldrian of Libasara; my only chance. He suddenly stood as my protector!

Who were the two courtiers? One was a notorious paramount courtier in white uniform

with two orders in gold with red tassels. And the other was an equally feared court adjutant in brown uniform with black cap and black belt. They carried lighted unguentum lamps in the dark hall, and passed me quite close—could have touched me! I struggled to walk at one with the statue while my stomach sounded like I had eaten a cat. Yes, they should definitely have heard and seen me. But was happily, and thank God, much too busy with their mutual quarrel. They also forgot to do homage to King Baldrian; as everyone must. I myself stood there in the darkness behind the statue and saluted: "Thank you, Baldrian! now you are complicit in my betrayal". I have no idea what the two courtiers were doing so early. But after many long years in Saubagol, I had almost lost the ability to wonder. The court paramount walked with small firm steps:

"This is the third time it's happened, Mr Court Adjutant. I don't want to deal with it, and I don't need to deal with it."

- What is it that you don't need to find yourself in, Mr Paramount Courtier?

- The rules are not there for the sake of the guard, but to ensure that all sections work, Mr Adjutant.

- Thank you, Mr Paramourty! And this is now the third time I draw your attention to the fact that you are wrong. The instructions have been changed on August 5, regardless of what you may wish or think.

- You can't even tell the difference between an instruction and a directive. One must really hope you can tell the difference between the country's friends and enemies. Otherwise you will no longer get need your uniform, Mr Adjutant.

- Are you threatening me, Mr Paramourty? I am only doing my duty. You are welcome to follow my example.

- Are you insulting me on top of that? You certainly lean against an official summons.

- Because I'm doing my duty? I do not envy you, if that is what you imply, Mr Paramourty! Insults also require that there is something to offend...

When I was left alone and the darkness once again embraced me, I was close to list trembling back to my palace apartment. But maybe they were already sitting there waiting for me? Nevertheless, now the "rose was cut" and I was only three minutes from leaving

the palace for good. I whispered my children's names. It helped! - Jack Wood smiles at us again: I continued down to one of the 469 larger or smaller magazine rooms in the palace's cellars. A depot for excess rolls of wallpaper, ceiling chains and many kinds of ladders, as well as a few rats. It also contained a good hiding place for the last money and things I had to take with me.

But in that room I also knew a small, low window that could be pried open with a flat iron straightener. 1834D to be exact.

"We have one like that, too," comes casually from Pollyanna.

- Really? says Jack Wood - and continues: "Farewell Palace!" I whispered, slowly pushing the window shut behind me. The warm night air breathed on my neck. From there I followed the palace wall closely, to a place with low growths. And that way out towards the caiman basin. I moved as I had learned as a commando: stay low - glide and erase your tracks, from point to point! The command was always: "GRACATOS!" when we weren't flat enough. We should then shout:

"Catch me
I'm free!
Kill me
I'm avenged!"

But when, in the dark, I threw the pieces of my uniform and my left service shoe into the caimans' basin, the animals swirled the water up violently. Attracted attention! I hadn't anticipated that. But I strongly felt that I would now either die or regain my freedom. I continued down to Canis Major and the guard dogs, the batalina staff, and out that way. I knew that...

And then I hear myself say:

"How could the dogs know you, Mr Wood, it was still dark night?" Jack Wood tilts his

head slightly. Catches me with an eye - and whistles. Pollyanna leans forward and whistles the same note. So it grows in strength and beauty. And I, Eutille, climb into their tone with my tone. Make our common tone more permanent, more perfect!

Then all three of us sit there and whistle the silver flute. As tears run down our cheeks. He nods at me and struggles with it:

"I am the .. " and we gather hands on the table and whistle, while Pollyanna and I kiss down into father's open hands. All three of us try to say something. Can't do it. We can only cry together. Hold each other. And finally laugh together! Suddenly, Police Officer Avery is gone and Yoko is standing in front of us with startled eyes. She shouts words that etch themselves into my open mind, but without reaching my newfound happiness: "The forest is burning!"

Name list of the most important people!

Pollyanna Lipatel, the eldest of the sisters. Helps Yoko in the workshop, but also works in the Blue Hall for Puno Fiala Bartos.

Yoko Lipatel, the middle sister. Continues his father's furniture business.

Eutille Lipatel, is their little sister, who is also the reader's eyes and ears.

Mila Lipatel and **Lucas Lipatel**, the girls' mother and father, whom they have lost.

Noah Courson, Transit Agent.

Goro Tamura, Procurator in Noah's staff.

Dimas Porter, Police Commissioner.

Relan Unusu, Assessor employed in Dimas' office.

Mizuto Maringa, Police Commissioner.

Junita Dinkelfield, CID Officer

Puno Fiala Bartos, wealthy businessman, guardian of the Lipatel girls.

Elno Trenson, Chief Director of Bartos' companies, married to Miranda Trenson, who work in the customs service.

Avitla Stun, Envoy for a foreign country.

Sandip Comar, Attaché under Avitla Stun.

Lupo Zimnat, gang leader under the "Sarracenia Circle".

Porka Bosaventus, Zimnat's right hand.

Soma King, drives for Yoko, and also delivers groceries.

Annabella King, Soma's wife. Sews, knits, crochets and weaves for Yoko.

Cona Abello, tourist from another country.

Daisy Song Garcia, retired teacher / historical person.

Jack Wood, patient at Ubitorama Hospital.

Nous Nicodemus, bewildered old man / destitute beggar.

Falzon Tremelius, Palace Intendant, Saubagol.

Caius Ten, Foreman under Falzon Tremelius

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