

**Keep Saying Their Names**

Simon Stranger

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Sample translation by Matt Bagguley

Oslo Literary Agency

Agent: Annette Orre

[annette@osloliteraryagency.no](mailto:annette@osloliteraryagency.no)

+49 922 53 352

# A

A for accusation.

A for arrest.

A for all that will disappear, and slip into oblivion. All the memories and feelings. All the property and possessions. All that comprises the framework of a life. The chairs you have sat in, and the bed you have slept in, will be carried out and placed in a new home. The plates will be laid out on the table by new hands and the glasses raised to someone else's lips, who will sip the water or the wine, before they continue their conversation. Items once loaded with histories will lose all their meaning and be transformed to mere shapes, like a piano might appear to a stag or a beetle.

One day it will happen. One day will be the last day for us all, neither of us knowing when it will be, or in which manner life will end. I don't know if I'll spend my final hours in a nursing home, coughing and spluttering, my skin hanging pale and loose from my arms like dough from a ladle. Or if I am going to die quite suddenly, 45 or 46 years old, struck by a lorry that swerves into the wrong lane while I'm driving perhaps, so that I'm swept to one side and crushed in the chassis amongst the twisted metal, and jagged splinters of glass. I might be killed by a block of ice that falls suddenly from a rooftop, loosened by the vibrations of someone drilling through bathroom tiles on the floor below, or by a gust of warm air from the sea, causing the ice block to loosen and slide past the window. Past living rooms and bedrooms, before striking me on the head as I read the news on my mobile with my head bent forward, causing the telephone to slip out of my hands and end up lit on the pavement, while horrified people crowd round in a semi-

circle. Random passersby, all of a sudden reminded of the abyss always right there beside every one of us: that all that we are and all we have can be taken away, quite suddenly, in the middle of all this normality.

According to Jewish tradition everyone dies twice. The first time is when the heart stops beating, and the synapses in the brain shut down, like a city during a blackout.

The second time is when the name of the deceased is mentioned, read or thought of for the last time, fifty or a hundred or four hundred years later. Only then is that person really gone, erased from life on Earth. This second death was what made the German artist Gunter Demnig start casting cobblestones in bronze, engraving them with the names of Jews murdered by the Nazis during the second world war, and embedding them in the pavement outside the houses where they once lived. He calls them *stolpersteine*. An attempt to postpone the second death, by writing down the names on the deceased, so that passersby in decades to come will look down and read them; and in doing so, keeping them alive, while at the same time ensuring that the memory of one of the worst chapters in Europe's history, is kept alive – as visible scars on the face of the city. For the time being 67.000 *stolpersteine* have been laid trough out Europe.

One of them is yours. One of these stones has your name on it, and is embedded in the pavement outside the house where you once lived, in the central-Norwegian city of Trondheim. A few years ago my son crouched beside this *stolpestein*, brushed away pebbles and sand with his mitten, and read aloud.

“Here lived Hirsch Komissar.”

He turned 10 that year, and is one of your great-great-grandchildren. As is my daughter, who was only six-years-old that spring. My wife, Rikke, stood beside me. Also, in this circle of people gathered as for the burial of an urn, was my mother-in-law, Grete, and her husband Steinar.

“Yes, he was my grandfather,” said Grete. “He lived right here, on the second floor,” she went on, turning to the building behind us, to the windows where you once stood looking out, in another age, when people other than ourselves were alive. I sat down and my daughter hung her arms round my neck, while my son continued reading the bare facts etched into the cobblestone.

HERE LIVED

## HIRSCH KOMISSAR

BORN 1887

ARRESTED 12.1.1942

FALSTAD

KILLED 7.10.42

Grete said something about the surprise invasion, recounted the story of how her father had seen the soldiers on the morning of April 9th, 1940. Rikke stood up to join the conversation, and my daughter slid off my back and nestled up to her. Only my son and myself were left looking down at the stolperstein. His finger stroked over the last line, then he looked up.

“Why was he killed, Dad?” he asked.

“Because he was Jewish.” I replied.

“Yes, but why?”

I noticed Rikke looking at me in the corner of my eye, following both conversations simultaneously.

“Well... The Nazis wanted to kill anyone who was different.”

My son went quiet.

“Are we Jewish too?” he asked. His brown eyes were clear and concentrated.

I blinked a few times, while trying to recall what he knew about the family’s history. What did my children know about being Jewish, and about our ancestry? We must have talked about how their great-great-grandparents on their mother’s side had emigrated from various parts of Russia more than a hundred years ago. I knew we had talked about the war, about their great-grand-father Gerson – whom they had both gotten to know before he died – and his escape to Sweden.

Rikke drew breath to say something, but then fell back into the conversation with Grete, and my eyes locked with my son’s.

“You’re Norwegian,” I replied, but I felt there was an element of deceit in my answer, and noticed Rikke looking at me again. “And a part of you is Jewish, but we’re not religious,” I said as I stood up, hoping that Rikke or Grete would say something too, that they would have a better answer than me, but their conversation had already leapt ahead, following the logic of association, and was now somewhere else entirely.

We went on our way, but my son’s question stuck with me. *Why was he killed, Dad?*

Shortly thereafter, I started browsing through various archives, and before long some of the pieces became more visible. Soon I was able to picture the snow in the centre of Trondheim, and the steam from people's breath as they passed the small, cocked wooden houses. And soon I could see how the end of your life began in the middle of the ordinary.

It is Wednesday, January 12th, 1942. You are standing behind the counter of the fashion boutique you and your wife own in Trondheim, surrounded by hats on stands, and mannequins wearing coats and dresses. You have just welcomed your first customer of the day, and told her about this week's special offers, when you have to put down your cigarette and the order form in order to pick up the phone.

"Paris-Vienna, can I help you?" you say, automatically, as you have done thousands of times before.

"*Guten morgen,*" says a man on the other end of the line, and continues, in German: "Am I talking to Komissar?"

"Yes, that's correct?" you reply, also in German, thinking momentarily that it might be one of your suppliers from Hamburg calling, perhaps because of problems at customs again. Perhaps it is the summer-dresses you have already ordered, but in that case it must be a new employee, because this voice does not sound familiar.

"Hirsch Komissar, married to Marie Komissar?"

"Yes ...? Who am I speaking to?"

"I am calling from the Gestapo's security service."

"Ok ..?"

You glance up from the order form, you can tell that your customer senses there is something going on, place your cigarette on the edge of the ashtray again and turn your face towards the wall, while your pulse beats hard. *The Gestapo?*

"There is a matter we would like to discuss with you," says the man in a low voice.

"Very well" you reply apprehensively, and are just about to open your mouth to ask what, when you are interrupted.

"Please come in for questioning at the Mission Hotel. Today, at 2pm," says the voice at the end of the line.

*Mission Hotel? For questioning?* Why in all the world are you being called in for questioning, you think with your face still turned to the wall. Could it have something to do with Marie's brother Daniel, and his communist sympathies? The spike from a headless nail pokes

out from the door-frame. You hold your thumb against the metal, press the point into your skin while closing your eyes.

“Hello?” says the voice at the other end, with an impatient tone. “Are you there?”

“Yes, I am here...” you reply, lifting your thumb from the spike and looking at the white spot where the blood has been pressed away from the flesh.

“Some of my colleagues think I am taking too much of a risk calling you like this...” the man says. There is the sound of a cigarette lighter being lit right next to the mouthpiece.

“...they think I should have sent a car and brought you in right away, so that you don’t just take your sons and disappear. After all you are *Jews*...” continues the voice, emphasising the last word, then continuing in a more hushed tone, almost confidingly. “But I know that your wife, Marie, has been admitted to the hospital... A fall on the ice, wasn’t it?»

“Yes, that’s correct... she slipped and fell on the ice a few days ago, and fractured ... a bone in her hip.” you reply, unable to remember the German word for “femur,” not quite sure if you’ve *ever* known it. You make your point anyway.

*How could Marie be so stupid to walk in high-heeled boots on those icy streets, you think.* So careless, constantly elegant, and with an unyielding need to decide everything herself. If you so much as hinted that she could do things differently, perhaps be a little more careful; that writing newspaper columns, or organizing meetings at home where political issues are discussed was reckless –and might very well be seen as political incitement – she would just sniff at you. A dark look would fall across her eyes, before she made it clear that she’d keep doing things her way. Now she has done so, and just look where it has lead, you think, as you stand behind the counter, still clutching the telephone.

“A *fractured femur*, yes...” says the faceless person at the other end, reminding you of the German designation. “...so I very much doubt you or your sons are likely to run off, right? If so, we would have to take care of her.”

*Take care of her.* You nod quietly, even though no one can read your body-language through the telephone, before replying that you will not be going anywhere.

“Good, Kommisar. Then we will see you here at 2pm. You know where to find us, right?”

“The Mission Hotel? yes, of course.”

“Good. A good day to you.”

There is a click as the person hangs up, and you stand there behind the counter, while your thoughts flutter around inside you like a mass of birds frightened out of a tree. What will you do now? You peer up at the clock. It is several hours until it is 2 o’clock. There is plenty of time, enough to simply run away from it all, you think, and consider, momentarily, creeping

into the stock room and exiting through the delivery door. Vanish in secret and just run, as far as you can, without stopping, ignoring the taste of blood in your mouth, the looks from strangers, or the tiredness in your legs from running uphill. You could have run all the way to the woods, gone into hiding among the pine trees and just kept going, towards the border to Sweden, where your daughter, Lillemor, is already living in safety. It could work, you think. But you know at once what a false notion this is, because what about Marie? What about your two sons, Gerson and Jacob? If you just ran off, *they* would be in peril, you think while folding up the order-form with your free hand. Even if you were able to notify Jacob through a man you know at his college, you wouldn't get hold of Gerson, because Gerson is somewhere in the Norwegian countryside with his college friends – and then what would happen to him, when he arrives back in town from the cabin trip, and finds the Germans waiting outside his bedsit? And what about Marie?

Are they true, the rumors which have begun circulating the shops, at dinners, and at the synagogue? About Jews being sent to special camps abroad. Or are they all just tall tales, exaggerations, like the monsters you imagined creeping around in the dark when you were a child?

You close up the shop, write a note saying CLOSED DUE TO ILLNESS and hang it on the inside of the door, before turning the key and walking up towards the hospital.

What sort of *matter* are they referring to? Perhaps it is nothing more than some vague accusation, nothing substantial enough to have you arrested, you think, on your way up the hill. You're careful to tread where it's been gritted, and cling onto the railings to avoid slipping on the polished ice-patches on the steps that resemble small, slippery jellyfish.

There's no reason to believe that it is anything serious, you've done nothing. It is probably a formality, perhaps a poll of the Jewish population, or worst case that they want to interrogate you about Marie's brother, you think, as you round the corner to the hospital.

A few hours later you are being questioned at the Mission Hotel, accused of spreading news from the BBC. One of your relatives has been overheard, at Cafe Bondeheimen in Trondheim, speaking with a friend about events he would have no knowledge of unless he had access to an illegal news source, like a radio; and during questioning you are accused of having known about this illegal activity without reporting it to the authorities, and for sharing news from England yourself. Immediately afterwards you are led to a prison cell in the basement, where you sleep on a thin mattress, and are forced to go the toilet in a concrete hole in the floor. You hear screams and cries from one of the interrogation rooms, before the steady hum of voices and footsteps returns.

The next morning you still believe you are going to be released, that someone in the system will realise that you're of no threat to The Third Reich, and that it would be cheaper and easier for them to let you get on with your business. But then three soldiers enter your cell and greet you politely, before asking you to place your hands behind your back. The metal handcuffs feel cold against your skin.

"Where are we going?" you ask, in German.

"Move," one of them replies, leading you up the steps, and along a corridor, to a courtyard where the snow lies heavily. A black car waits with its motor running. You are pushed into the back seat. Then you are driven out of town. It takes a while before it dawns on you where you are going.

Falstad concentration camp.

An hour's drive from Trondheim. A yellow brick-building constructed around a courtyard, and surrounded by wooden barracks and barbed-wire fences, where the snow has formed a thin white layer on the twisted metal threads.

The gates open, and you are escorted through an entrance hall, past a naked birch-tree, and into the building. You are taken up to the first floor, where there are rows and rows of cell-doors. Wooden doors, with curved grills in front of the hatches. The face of another prisoner appears at one of them. Two guards stand outside the cell and watch while you get undressed, then you are locked in a rectangular room, with a window at one end, and a bunk bed. The bolt slides to in the door behind you, and the anxiety rises as you realise you cannot escape. Anxiety when you realise that this is perhaps the end, and that everything has happened for the last time. The seriousness in the faces of some of the prisoners. The apathy in others, who just sit, staring at the wall.

A for the alcohol you find yourself missing during your first weeks in the camp, a longing for a hit that might numb your surroundings and thoughts; and allow the confusion, the rage and the terror to subside. Lulled into a stupor of oblivion.

A for the associations that strike you, suddenly and anytime, on your way to forced labor, eating in the cafeteria or out in the woods. Moments of sudden, unexpected recollection, as if all that exist is as an opening to something else.

The crude slits from truck wheels in the grounds outside the camp can suddenly take you back to the small dirt roads where you grew up, in the Jewish part of the Russia of the last Tsar,



with bright brown chickens chirping behind the fences and a ragged dog you always made a detour to avoid walking past.

Seeing a guard leaning back and closing his eyes in the summer sun, you recall your student days in Germany, and the overwhelming glimpses of happiness you felt when you took a break from your books to lean back on a bench in a park, in a country not yet seized by the Nazis.

A freshly washed shirt hung out to dry outside one of the barracks, flung out like a sail in the wind, is an echo from the fashion store Marie and you established from scratch, or from the refugee camp in Sweden you were stupid enough to leave, where clothes were hung out to dry at clotheslines outside the houses, while the children roamed around.

And always, as soon as the camp is quiet and you can lie down in your cell and close your eyes, you think of their faces. Marie's dark hair, and the fire in her eyes, when she speaks about something she cares deeply about. The faces of Gerson and Jacob, your sons, and of Esther, who everyone calls Lillemor. Perhaps because she is so petite, or perhaps because she has always been like a second mom to her baby brothers. She loved carrying them around when they were little, feeding them and imitating the sounds they made in order to make them laugh.

You try to picture the recalcitrant look on Gerson's face when he is put in place, and feel a sting at the notion that you did not support him more. And Jacob's shyness and his embarrassed smile when he gets nervous or too agitated and starts to stutter. The lightness in Lillemor's entire being, thank God she stayed in Sweden. You try to remember every detail from their faces, but feel the images turn ever coarser and more unclear, as if the camp was a machine erasing your memories gradually, week by week, month by month, until nothing is left but presence, sweat, labor.

As for all the stories hidden underneath this *stolperstein*. A sudden and overwhelming number of stories that have started to emerge over the last few years, like the armies of insects that used to scurry out from underneath the stones you lifted as a child.

Dear Hirsch. This is my attempt to postpone the second death, and override oblivion. There is now way for me to tell the entire story of your life and what happened to you, but I can gather some of the pieces, put them together and try to reimagine the things that are lost. I am not Jewish, but my children, your great-grandchildren share your Jewish blood. Your history is their history. How can I, as a father, explain to them why someone hated you so much?

Lifting the stone with your name on it would soon lead me to the history of a villa on the outskirts of Trondheim. A story so monstrous and unlikely that I at first could not bring myself

to believe it could actually be true, because this house merges our shared family history with the story of Henry Oliver Rinnan, one of the most infamous criminals in Norwegian history.

A house with a nickname that begins with B.

“Bandeklosteret.”

# B

B for building.

B for bande.

B for “Bandeklosteret,” the name the locals gave the notorious house in Jonsvannsveien 46, on a hill just outside Trondheim city centre. In the decades after the war, local people would cross to the other side the street as they passed this house, as if the evil from the place might somehow leak into the air and infect them. It was within these four walls Henry Oliver Rinnan and his gang made their plans during the war; where they interrogated prisoners, tortured, killed, drank and partied. A journalist who inspected Bandeklosteret shortly after the Nazis had surrendered, wrote this about his experiences:

*“They have torn the whole house apart, seemingly driven by a rampant thirst for destruction. Every room appears to have been used for target practice – the walls and ceilings are riddled with bullet holes – and where they felt that the wallpaper was still a little too intact, they have cut it into shreds. Even the bath and bathroom walls are full of holes from projectiles. One must assume that the shooting played a role in the mortal terror of the prisoners sitting in the pitch-darkness of the tiny cells in the basement.”*

This villa also turned out to be hiding another story, which I first heard about in the kitchen of one of your grandchildren: my mother-in-law, Grete Komissar.

It was a Saturday or Sunday, a slow morning where nothing really needed to be done, when time itself stretched out more than usual. A jazz record played on the stereo in the living room, where the calm piano-playing merged into the sound of the children trying to balance on a large gym-ball, small bursts of laughter, short thuds as their bodies hit the carpet. I was in the kitchen with Grete, who had already begun preparing the dinner by chopping up pears and putting the long slices into an oven-proof dish with some chicken legs and vegetables. We must have talked about something to do with childhood, because when her husband appeared in the doorway, he asked if I knew that Grete had grown up in Rinnan’s headquarters. Although there was

something familiar about the name, I was completely unable to place it, let alone say who it was. Steinar began trying to jog my memory by using the first name too – Henry – adding that he was a Norwegian Nazi and double agent and outlined the extent of the cruelty that had been inflicted in those rooms. Torture. Murder. Grete used her arm to wipe the hair off her forehead, still holding the kitchen knife in one hand while the other one was greasy from the chicken fat. The situation was strangely tense, this was obviously a subject she would prefer to avoid. Still, it would be too awkward to start talking about something else entirely, and she was more or less stuck in the conversation, standing between the kitchen table and counter.

There was the sound of a bump from the living room, and I heard my wife Rikke ask the kids if they could go play on the floor above us, before she appeared in the doorway and snuck her way past Steinar.

"And you grew up there?" I asked. I had known Grete for more than fifteen years, but this was something she had never mentioned.

"Yes, I lived there from the time I was born, until I was seven," she replied.

"What's that?" asked Rikke, aware that she must have missed something.

"I just told him that I grew up in the Rinnan band's house," Grete repeated, and cut the last pear in half, as if this was nothing special whatsoever. From the look on Rikke's face I could tell that this was news to her as well. Grete put down her knife, turned on the faucet and wet her hands. Then it seemed as if she felt like talking more after all.

"We actually put on these little theatre performances in *the cellar*," she said, emphasising the word *cellar*, while pumping soap from the dispenser. "In the very same room the Rinnan gang had used, just a few years earlier," she added. Together with her older sister Jannicke, Grete had put on little plays and musical performances down in the basement along with their friends living nearby. They had dressed up in their parent's clothes; ladies shoes, and hats, and necklaces, all far too big for them, and used clothes-brushes as microphones. Children and adults from the neighbourhood were invited, and Grete's role had been to stand at the top of the stairs and collect the hand-made tickets, while the adults would descend the steps with their heads bowed and eyes darting left and right.

The image of the little girl at the top of the stairs, and the children's songs being sung in the torture chamber posed a new set of questions; why in all the world did this Jewish family choose to go and live in a house that had become the very symbol of evil in Trondheim? Was it that cheap? Or did they want to reclaim history? And did the house somehow affect those living in it?

Anxious to learn more, I read all I came across about the Rinnan gang, and looked at pictures of the house where Grete had grown up. It was as if something came loose this morning, for in the weeks and months to come, Grete started talking more about her early childhood.

When Grete and Steinar were selling the apartment they still owned back in Trondheim, we went to visit them one last time. We strolled down the street where the Paris-Wien boutique once was situated, and made another stop by the stolperstein with your name on it. Then we got in the car, drove out of the city center to the little street where Grete grew up, in Jovannsveien 46. It was a low house, with dark windows. Outside stood an old, red car, as if time had stood still.

“Shall we ring the doorbell?” asked Grete. I nodded, and since no one else moved, I walked down the short gravel path and pressed the button. Waited and waited for the door to open, while trying to figure out what to say.

B for bullet. A copper-coloured bullet pulled from one of the walls, now standing on the shelf above my writing desk. The tip is dented like a chef’s hat from its impact with the brickwork, down in the cellar, perhaps a result of one of the games the gang members played to soften up the prisoner, where they would tie a man to a chair, and shoot at him, competing over how close they could get, without actually hitting him.

B for babies and bulging cheeks. B for bare legs flailing in the air over the changing table, for small, chubby legs barely managing to stay upright while the arms are stretched out for better balance. B for beginnings - and the beginning of the story of Bandeklosteret is the story about a kinder-garden, run by Else Tambs Lyche, in the cellar, in the years leading up to the war.

B for boots and brothers, in a memory from early childhood. Most of us grow up oblivious to how the mass of events and feelings from our early years will collect like sediment on the sea-bed, and sit deep within us, forming landscapes and mannerisms that may affect us for the rest of our lives. Just as this winter’s day might have done for the ten-year-old Henry Oliver Rinnan.

It is February 1925. Snow flurries swirl in the air outside the school in Levanger, collecting in microscopic snow-drifts on the window ledge beside Henry’s head, as he sits hunched over his writing desk. His fringe hangs over his eyes, as he sits in deep concentration over his work, and is just reaching for his eraser to rub out the curve in a g he is unhappy with, when he notices

something. The teacher stops abruptly in the middle of a sentence, looks straight at Henry's little brother and asks how he is.

*You look so pale ... are you ill?* she says while stepping from behind her desk. Henry notices how the others look up from their books to see what is happening. He watches how they exchange glances, small sparks that ignite their expectations, because now the teacher is moving between the rows of desks. Soon she will see exactly what Henry's brother has been trying to hide all morning; that he is wearing *ladies* boots. A pair of black ladies boots that were never collected from his father's shoe-repair shop. Henry *knew* that this was going to be a problem, he had tried to prevent it; had tried to tell his mother that she could not send her son to school wearing *ladies* shoes. But his mother had waved his little brother's winter boots in front of his face, shown him the gaping hole between the sole and the leather, and in a voice which left no room for rebuttal, made it clear that his little brother could not go to school in such tatty winter shoes, that his feet would be soaked through before he even reached the corner. There was nothing more to be said, and Henry was unable to stand up to her, so that was that. Luckily, the heels were not that high, but wherever his brother walked it was plain to see that there was something off; they were several sizes too big, his feet rattled around in them, so that he had to curl his toes up to stop them sliding, and thereby walked with strange, unnatural steps. Henry had tried to act as though nothing was wrong, they had walked right past the gang of boys at the school gates, who were busy with something else, so no one had actually noticed the shoes, before they came into the classroom. Inside, Henry watched as some of them peeped over at his little brother's feet, and saw how two of the girls in the class nudged one another and sniggered. But at that moment the teacher walked in, which meant everyone had to behave themselves, and stand by their desks and say: "Good morning!"

They had returned to their seats, and he had knuckled down to his schoolwork, concentrating on joining the letters, one by one, in neat loops. It was important to get everything perfect, otherwise the teacher might scold him, or write something in the margin that his parents would read, which he had to avoid. He couldn't bare to see the disappointment in his mother's face, so he grabbed his pencil, and wrote word after word, and had almost forgotten about it all until he heard the teacher comment on how pale his little brother looked, and now she is heading towards his desk. Henry feels the heat welling up in his face, he watches how his little brother retracts his feet under the table, and tries to wind them around the chair-legs, but that doesn't help, because now the teacher has stopped, and is clearly so astonished that the words just slip out of her, as though she has lost control over them.

“But ... What on earth are you wearing on your feet?” she asks, while the other pupils begin to giggle. Henry feels his heart beating faster, feels the embarrassment burning his cheeks, then he looks over at his brother, but his little brother says nothing, just sitting there looking apprehensive, his eyes flicking sideways, clearly unsure of what to say. *He must not tell the truth at least*, Henry thinks – that his father, a shoe-maker has not bothered to repair his own children’s shoes – at the very least *he must not say that*. It would be better for him to come up with a white lie, such as he took the first shoes he found, for example, or that he was just fooling around to see if anyone noticed, but he does not say any of this, the brother, he does not utter a sound. *But he must say something*, Henry thinks, because this silence is making things worse, adding to the shame already hanging over him. So Henry lets out a little “ahem” as if to clear his throat, and to draw the attention, of the teacher and the other pupils, towards him and away from his little brother. He feels them staring. The attention makes his heart beat even faster, makes him feel even more insecure and nervous, but they cannot see this, and now it is he who must speak, smooth it all over somehow. He thinks, and forces himself to maintain eye-contact with the teacher.

“Oh, he’s just been messing about trying on shoes at the workshop back home,” says Henry Oliver, smirking a little, in an attempt to make her believe that it’s all just an amusing prank not worth worrying about. But he can tell by the look on the teacher’s face that she doesn’t believe him, because she doesn’t smile back, she actually crouches down beside his little brother, places a hand on his shoulder, and points out how thin he has become. With great concern in her voice she asks: *Are things difficult at home*, and of course she understands that this might be humiliating for Henry and his little brother, so she says it as quietly as possible so the others cannot hear, but in doing so she only makes matters worse. Because it then becomes obvious to everyone that it *is* something to be ashamed of, that it *is* something no-one else should hear, and everyone hears it, he is certain about that. Even though she only whispers, the words reach every single ear in the room and transform the staring looks, to half-open mouths and smiling eyes.

Now his brother *has* to say something, Henry thinks, only he doesn’t, he just seems totally confused, and looks up unhappily, first at the teacher, and then over to Henry, while his eyes glaze over with tears, causing him to blink several times. He sniffs, and lifts his forearm to his nose. There is silence. Total, silence.

“Things are fine at home, thanks” says Henry, in a clear and resolute voice. “He’s just been a little unwell. Could you kindly continue with the lesson,” he continues, returning to the sentence he was in the middle of writing, he grabs the eraser and rubs out the loop in the g he

was unhappy with. Then he brushes away the crumbs from the eraser, grasps his pencil, demonstratively showing that there is nothing more to be discussed, and that he really must continue with his schoolwork. At the same time he listens intently, trying to interpret the mood in the classroom, whilst seemingly drawing the tip of his pencil across the page.

It is as though his senses are sharpened, because Henry notices how all the staring subsides, and he hears the sound of chairs scraping the floor as people sit up properly. The sound of pencils scratching on paper, and of the teacher who opens her mouth and finally continues with the lesson. But at the same time he notices how some of them are whispering, he feels the pressure of laughter rising in their chests desperate to come out, like the steam under a saucepan lid. Luckily the final school bell rings, so he has to put his books into his satchel, and get hold of his little brother.

They have no choice but to walk through the school yard, forcing their way past ridiculing looks. A gang of slightly older boys start laughing loudly, and pointing at his brother's boots.

“Well look at *her*?! See you later, miss Rinnan!” says one of the biggest boys as Henry's little brother walks past, and the joke causes the others nearby to erupt, a taunt beyond mere cheekiness which they try to hide. But Henry just cannot tolerate it, he feels the anger boiling up inside, a wave of darkness pushing its way to the front. It takes over his body and before he has time to think, he swings a clenched fist and smashes it right into the face of the pupil who ridiculed his little brother. He has no right to talk like that! No right to talk to his brother like that, thinks Rinnan, and feels the hardness of the boy's cheekbone against his own knuckles, feels the anger seething within him, and sees the boy bring his hands to his face while recoiling in pain. There is a brief moment of uncertainty amongst the group, before the other boys throw themselves upon Henry. Suddenly it all erupts in a chaos of fierce eyes and screaming mouths. Hands reaching out at him, fingers grasping at his hair and for the satchel on his back, and in a flash he is lying on his back, and feels his arms and legs being held down, feels his breath, his heart and the anger and the snow.

“Oi, you lot! Stop that right away!” shouts a teacher who leans out of a window with his pipe in his hand. And they release him reluctantly, one by one, let him stand up, but not without whispering a warning in his ear. *Just you wait, Henry Oliver. You're not fucking getting away with this!*

He brushes the mess from his trousers, the anger still trembling through him, so much that it is difficult to draw breath into his lungs, it is just as though he is winded, but now he grabs his little brother's hand, and walks, quickly, quickly, quickly, just to get away from it all, from the school and the other kids before things get worse, and impossible to put right again, he



thinks, and he sees the laughter in the eyes of a girl from one of the other classes, how ridiculous she thinks he is, and it is of course understandable, he would have started laughing too, if this wasn't actually happening to him, except it was. Now there is an air of something foolish clinging to him, a ridiculous story that the whole school will be whispering about in the weeks to come. Just the thought of it causes the desperation to well up in him, because they will find an opportunity where they can get him again, without him knowing where or when. That is what he meant, this boy who whispered in Henry's ear, *just you wait*, it was a warning no doubt, a promise that they would continue beating him up later, that they were not quite finished with him, Henry thinks, while clenching his teeth. He who has been so careful all along, ever since he began school, done as he should have, stayed away from conflict, mastered the art of smiling disarmingly. He has allowed the bigger boys to be the ones who caused trouble, kept his distance while they romped about, having play-fights and kicking footballs, because he knew he could not look after himself, that he did not have it in him. So it was best to attract as little attention as possible, live so as not to be drawn into anything at all. That had been his strategy, and now it was ruined.

If only his brother not been so stupid and started crying, Henry thinks, gripping his brother's wrist even tighter, a little too tight perhaps, as well as increasing the pace along the gravel track. His brother whimpers a little, but he will just have to put up with it. He needs to learn to behave differently, or he will always end up being a victim, the one the other pupils single out when they feel like picking on someone, and that will effect Henry too, he will be infected by it, like a bad smell, he thinks, and that is something he can do without, he who is so short already. The shortest in the class, and obviously the one from the poorest family of them all, he thinks, while striding ahead quickly, dragging his little brother behind him, and noticing him grimacing from the corner of his eye, hears how he begs Henry to let him go, but he ignores him, he wants to punish his brother for the way he behaved. He could have grinned at the others instead, acted as though nothing they said affected him, but no; he *had* to start crying, *had* to break down like he did, even though he knew that it would come to no good, Henry thinks, while dragging his brother onwards, round the corner of the school and down the road. He feels his brother pull on his arm, sees the snot running out of his nostril, and the tears welling up in his eyes again. *You're hurting me, Henry Oliver*, his little brother sobs. The sight of the tears running down his cheeks makes Henry let go at once, he strokes his fingers as gently as possible over the spot he had been gripping, and says *Sorry!* Says it several times, while adding that he did not mean to hurt him. Perhaps for a moment he did, but not really.

“Are you OK?” Henry asks. His brother nods, while rubbing his wrist with his mitten. Then they continue home, and Henry knows he must make his brother smile again, and wipe away any traces of tears before they arrive home, because if his mother sees that he has been crying she will start asking questions, and he will have to tell her everything, and then what? Then his mother will have even more to worry about, and she does not need that right now, with eight children and married to a shoe-maker who barely has any work, and she cannot do anything about his problems anyway. Cannot change the fact that they are so hard up, or that Henry is so short, or that the others laugh at him. He asks his brother to remove his gloves and blow his nose on his hand, and then wipe it off in the snow. His brother does as he is told. His hands turn red from cold, but he gets rid of the snot. Henry takes his own gloves off, moulds a handful of snow between his hands, and strokes his brother gently under his eyes with moist fingers.

Then he says: “We’re not going to mention this at home, right?”

“No?”

“It’ll only make Mom and Dad worried, and they have enough to think about. Right?”

“I guess so,” his brother replies, before continuing down the road. Henry tries to come up with some games along the way. Walks his fingers along the sleeve of his brother’s jacket and into his armpit, to trick him out of the sombre mood, right now, make him think about something else, so his fingers wriggle into his brother’s armpit, and he sees his face soften up again, how the fighting and the cold and the crying vanishes, and makes room for them to talk about everything else again, as they use to. They amble towards home, kicking a stone.

Soon they they are walking among Levanger’s wooden houses, through the grave-yard, with its little, white church, and row upon row of colorfully painted terraces on the opposite side of the road. This is where they live, at 63 Kirkegata. A two-storey wooden house, painted green. His father’s workshop on the ground-floor, and their apartment above.

Henry sees his mother pass quickly by the kitchen window, probably on her way to peel potatoes, rinse clothes or chop vegetables, and notices the happiness now draining from his little brother’s face, and the events from their day at school returning.

“It’ll be ok,” Henry says smiling, placing a hand on his brother’s shoulder and stroking it downwards. “Come on!”

The house smells of boiled potatoes, and the hallway is full of shoes.

“Hello?!” Henry calls out, as he always does, making sure he uses the exact same tone of voice, to avoid raising any suspicion. His mother comes out from the kitchen. Beads of sweat on her forehead and spots of white milk on her apron. His youngest sister stands behind her, holding on to her skirt, a little unsteady, reaching upwards and wanting to be picked up.

“So. How was school today? Wasn’t it nice to have warm feet?” she asks, and the words must cause his father to sit up suddenly in the lounge, because Henry hears the sound of the springs creaking in the old arm-chair, and immediately after that his father appears in the kitchen doorway. He stands there smiling, and waving the little boy’s winter shoes in the air to show him that they have now been fixed.

“There, now you don’t have to walk around in ladies boots *tomorrow* at least,” says his father, and Henry can see the humiliation in his face, how his facial muscles tighten, so that his smile is not quite genuine, but something at least meant to be a smile, and is trying to hide what he and his mother are thinking, and what the others are thinking; that he should have repaired the shoes a long time ago. That it what a good father would do, then again there is eight of them, and a chaotic muddle of shoes in the hallway, and their father cannot be expected to check every single shoe, every day, Henry thinks, pushing away what he already knows; that he has heard his mother ask his father to fix the shoes several times during the last two weeks.

“Thanks, father,” says his little brother, and takes his winter shoes.

“Now ... did anybody notice them?” his father asks jokingly, nodding towards the ladies boots, and Henry is suddenly relieved when his sister grabs the tablecloth, and is about to pull on it so that all the plates and vases tip over and get dragged over the edge, because it means his mother doesn’t notice the unusual tone in his little brother’s voice, or the embarrassed look on his face when he replies, in a quiet, timid voice:

“No, father.”

B for the building at the Falstad prison camp: a yellow, two-storey building, constructed in stone around a square yard, with an assortment of barracks spread out all around it. Small basic huts for the guards and the pigs and the cows, in addition to outhouses and carpentry sheds, before one reaches the barbed-wire fence around the perimeter.

B for the birch tree you pass in the yard, with its dirty white trunk, and leaves now all yellow, like the color of the fabric samples sent to you from your business in Trondheim.

B for the books, full of flowers and ferns, categorised, with neatly handwritten labels and compiled by Jonsvannsveien 46’s first owner, long before the house became Rinnan’s headquarters. A professor with the peculiar name Ralph Tambs Lyche, who collected plants, systematised them, and made one of the largest botanical collections in Norway. A Norwegian-American botanist who worked at NTNU before being arrested and sent to Falstad, while his

wife Elise used the cellar as a kinder-garden, which meant the hallway was always full of small boots when he came home from work.

B for the bags packed into the car, and the beech trees whose leaves are uncoiling from buds on this spring day, in Oslo, 1948. The sun shines on the rooftops, causing yesterday's raindrops to sparkle as they drip from the gutter. Gerson reaches for the handle on the trunk of the car, moving about in an unnecessarily agitated way. It's not like they are trying to get anywhere on time, other than Trondheim before nightfall. Jannicke crouches down on the pavement, and is about to pick up a stone and put it in her mouth when Ellen lifts her up, forces the stone out of her little hand, even though Jannicke resists and tries to twist herself from her mother's grip. She begins wailing: *Mine! Mine! Mine!* while Ellen puts her in the back seat, and Gerson sits down behind the wheel.

The remaining furniture was carried out earlier that day, and sent in advance by truck. The decision to move had been made a few months earlier. First in the form of tiny hints, because whenever Gerson chatted to his mother on the phone, she often mentioned between the lines that she needed help to run the business. That it was far too much for her to cope with alone. Then she had come to visit them. Traveled to Oslo by train, and Gerson had stood on the platform and waited for her, watched her climb down in high-heeled boots and wearing a hat so wide that it brushed the door frame as she walked out. She had waved, and stood aside, because a stranger came along with her suitcase. His mother had always been like that. So well dressed and elegant that the very notion of carrying anything herself would be against her nature. Gerson just stood and watched how she kissed the man on the cheek as a reward, before waving him off. Then she turned to Gerson, without showing any sign of picking up her luggage herself, so Gerson had to go over and lift it for her. *I would have done it anyway, of course*, he thought, nevertheless it was the way she took it for granted that irritated him; the entitled attitude, but he just had to bite his tongue. Just smiled and replied briefly to her retorts, as he was expected to, because even though she asked him how he was, she was not interested in hearing more than a succinct "good" for an answer. She did not want to hear about the problems of finding a job, about how drastic life had changed with the birth of their daughter, or how the war had snatched his future away just as her life began. Marie had her own concerns, always did have, thought Gerson, remembering how Ellen had laughed when he told her about his summer holidays as a child. How he and Jacob had been booked into in a hotel, all alone for several weeks, even though they were no more than 10-12 years old, because their parents were so busy working.

Marie was talking about how cramped it was in Ellen and Gerson's apartment before she had even walked through the door, and Gerson had seen how Ellen had slumped, how her smile stiffened, because of course she agreed. She too came from a prosperous family, the daughter of a factory owner.

"We *will* move, mother. We've bought a plot at Holmen, and once the townhouse is built, we'll move in," said Gerson, while taking her coat.

"That's precisely what I want to talk to you about," said Marie, as she walked on into the dining room. "I have found a house for you, a house in Trondheim, right in the centre. A house with a garden, and an indoor toilet, not in the alleyway, like here. A detached house, Gerson, and a job in the clothing shop. His mother turned to Ellen, who sat with Jannicke on her lap, and told her about Paris-Vienna, about the dresses, the fabrics, the hats and coats which Ellen could of course borrow and take home if she wanted.

Marie said nothing about the house's background then. A few weeks later she called Gerson, and casually mentioned it towards the end of the conversation, just before hanging up, as if it was a random detail.

"Oh, and by the way. The house was used by the Rinnan gang for a couple of years during the war."

Gerson turned his back to the living room, and screwed up his eyes.

"Hello?" said his mother. "Are you there?"

"But ... Mother? Why didn't you mention this before?"

"Because I was afraid Ellen would have blown it all out of proportion and make a big drama about it," said Marie, in Yiddish.

"But now ... don't you think we should ... have known about it?" replied Gerson in Yiddish, as he heard Ellen babbling away to Jannicke in the background.

"*Known* about, or got to know about," his mother corrected. "But what does that have to do with it anyway Gerson? The war is over, the Rinnan gang were out of the house years ago. It's a beautiful detached house in a nice area, with a garden. It's the only way you'll get yourselves something proper, and anyway I need you up there, Gerson.

Gerson fell silent, and Marie switched back to speaking Norwegian.

"Should I have just said *no thanks*? Should I have just said that my son won't take the house, and cannot move to Trondheim, because he and his wife are afraid of ghosts?"

"No mother," replied Gerson, as he heard Ellen walk in from the living room, carrying Jannicke.

He said nothing. Each time Gerson felt ready to tell Ellen about the house's background, something got in the way. Now it was spring, the decision had been made, and they were in the car. Gerson turned the key in the ignition, and off they drove, while two-year-old Jannicke slowly forgot what she was angry about. Soon the tension from the carrying and the organising slipped away, and they began chatting. Watched the houses glide by outside the windows. A lorry piled up with hay. Stripes of thin pine-tree trunks flicker past, while Jannicke drags her tiny fingers over the glass, and presses her tongue against it. Gerson smiles in the rear-view-mirror. Starts to imagine life in Trondheim, and work at Paris-Wien. He inhales deeply and feels Ellen place her hand over his own, on the wheel. Then he quickly turns to her and smiles, changes gear, and places his hand on her thigh, just above her knee, feels her warm skin just beneath her tights, conjures up an image of a contented family in the new house's garden. It has to work out.

B for the baritone voice of the prisoner ordered to entertain them at Falstad. In the middle of the work the soldiers would sometimes ask him to sing for them. The sawing would stop, as would all the banging of hammers from the carpentry workshops, and the continual shuffling of hands and feet. And then it was as if something was awakened in each one of them. With a clear and beautiful voice, the baritone would sing, with his head tilted back, like an elegy to the heavens, his phrasings softening their circumstances. Their aching muscles, and the constant stinging from small cuts and blisters would disappear for a few seconds. The guard's faces would loosen up, become relaxed, a little more human, before they would pull themselves together, slip back into their rolls.

In moments like this you consider the possibility that some of these young men could be the same ones you saw in German cities ten years earlier. When they were 10-12 years old, and ran through the streets on scrawny and knobbly legs, with ungainly arms, and eyes that glowed with curiosity and joy. Maybe you smiled at one of the guards when he was a little boy, or chatted briefly in a park with another. But now?

B for Bar Mitzvah or for the benches in the Trondheim synagogue which you helped to purchase.

B for the bedroom the Rinnan gang used, photographed at the end of the war with drawers, clothes, rubbish and papers spread all over the floor, and wallpaper torn to shreds.

It's the afternoon, and I'm working at home in Oslo and searching through some online archives. The first photo shows the exterior of the villa. A house with an arched window on the first floor, and shutters that open and close in front of the windows. The barbed wire around the property has already been removed, along with the guards who used to stand outside.

B for bottles of liquor photographed that same day, piled up in the cellar behind two large barrels straddled by a heavy iron bar, bent in the middle, presumably from the weight of those forced to crouch with their limbs tied – before being hung from it, whipped, beaten and branded.

The naked backside of a man's thigh pops up on the screen in front of me, in black and white, with a Swastika branded onto it. Then I hear footsteps approaching, I must have been so deeply immersed that I didn't hear anyone come in, and now my daughter is standing right behind me. I hastily close the browser window, only to reveal a photo of three whips.

“What's that, Dad?” my daughter asks, before I exit the browser entirely.

“I'm just reading about the war,” I say, and press my cheek against hers. Lift her up, and carry her little, warm body, away from the computer.

B for the blood on Bandeklosteret's floor, dripping from the axe that one of the gang members is holding. It is the end of April, 1945, and Rinnan walks into the washroom. He sees the boxes standing in the middle of the room, as well as the large pools of blood, slowly running into the drain. Rinnan gives a nod of acknowledgement to the man standing there, breathless, the axe hanging loosely by his thigh.

# C

C for Cadillac.

C for cowboy.

C for *cremaster*, the muscle that develops in a boy's crotch during puberty. A process transforming him from within by secreting hormones that cause hair to grow on the legs and in the crotch. It changes the voice and makes the face look harder, more angular, while a tallowy layer spreads across the nose and cheeks, emphasizing this transformation, and the gradual departure from childhood.

Sometimes when Henry is all alone in the hallway, he studies himself the mirror, thinking that poverty has made him so unusually short. Sometimes he hears his mother mention to a friend or a shopkeeper, that he's just a late bloomer, that he'll catch up later on, and the words fill him with hope, but it never happens. Henry gets older, but he never catches up in height with the others. He still finds himself outside the pack. He says that he doesn't want to play football with them, that he doesn't like the game, but the truth is that he lies in bed fantasizing about being on the football pitch, dribbling past player after player until it's just him and the goalie. He imagines himself lobbing the ball elegantly over the boy who throws himself to the ground, and how his team-mates come charging towards him, lifting him onto their shoulders, their faces full of triumph and jubilation. But it doesn't happen. It never happens. He stays quiet instead. Polite. Careful. He tries to make himself as unobtrusive as possible, because if you're not seen, you can't be bullied.

Henry turns thirteen and borrows a magazine from his uncle. There is an drawing of a cowboy on the cover. While the rest of his family sit drinking coffee, and his father goes on about how the communists should be cut down and destroyed before they take over the country, Henry begins to read, and finds a portal to another world, because the story of the cowboy sucks him in, transporting him far from the streets of Levanger, away from the schoolyard and the boys who hassle him on the way home.



He turns fourteen and wakes one night with an unusual stickiness on his belly, and his hands on the breasts of someone's big sister, her naked body melting away right before his eyes.

He turns fifteen, goes through confirmation, and like many others Henry's confirmation gift is to have his rotten teeth pulled out and replaced with dentures. New smooth teeth that he can stroke his tongue over, teeth that glow white in the mirror.

He turns sixteen, and ceases to grow any more. So this will be him. A man of laughable 161 centimetres.

The shortest sixteen-year old in Levanger. His head reaches the shoulders of most of his classmates, and his body seems peculiarly small compared to his head, as if he belonged to another species than the others. A different, uglier branch of humanity, brighter than most, this he knows, but shorter. It doesn't help being polite. It doesn't help that he behaves himself, acts responsibly at school and does everything he is told. The adults seem to like him, but only because he doesn't cause any trouble and never tries to draw attention to himself. The pupils overlook him. The boys aren't interested and neither are the girls. He should have been taller. He prays to God to make him keep growing, but nothing happens.

Had his parents been equally short, he could have blamed them, but his mother and father are just like everyone else. His brothers too. *He's* the only one standing out. Why? Why him? There's no answer, no solution. The only thing he can do, is to grow a long fringe, fill it with brylcreem and comb the whole lick of hair back, and up, as high as possible from his crown, and hope that the extra centimetres this *quiff* gives him will make it easier for him to blend into with the other boys. But it doesn't help. He still looks different, and stands out, visibly weaker, so of course the other boys will pick on him. Henry understands this, it is clearly the way nature is designed. Everywhere he goes he sees it. The strongest take everything they want, they make their own rules, and can make others obey. That's how it is. Of course the other boys will surround him, and shove him about when the grown-ups are not looking.

Henry grits his teeth, tries to let it all bounce off him, knowing that there is nothing he can do.

The harassment from the other boys often continues the moment he closes his eyes at night. Then he pictures the gleeful looks in the boys' faces as they push him back and forth, while only one thought runs through his head, that he must not crack, that he must never break.

C for *Carl Fredriksen's Transport*, the codename of an illegal organisation that smuggled Norwegian Jews and members of the resistance, from a gardening-supplies shop in Carl Berners Plass, Oslo across the border into Sweden. More than a thousand people were saved by this

organisation during the autumn and winter, 1942–43. One of them was your daughter in law, Ellen Glott, Rikkens grandmother. Another was your wife, Marie.

C for *Cappelengården*, the green-painted wooden house in Sjøgata, Levanger, right down by the water. It is now spring 1931, and 16-year-old Henry walks by Cappelengården, with roaming eyes like he normally does. He notices a crowd of youths outside Hveding Sports, the shop where his uncle works. Henry has visited the shop many times before, ever since he was so little that he had to stand on his toes to look over the counter, while his father bought something for his bike or the workshop back home. This time Henry has made the trip into town to get a glimpse of the Ford his uncle has purchased. A real Ford, the first one in town, with shining, black bodywork and dark-brown leather seats. After a great deal of discussion, Hveding Sports have started a car dealership, as well as opening the city's first petrol station, so that the cars, which will eventually arrive, will be able to fill their tanks here. The shop will begin selling cars and accessories, and to mark this change they have placed an actual Ford motor car in the shop window facing the street, although Henry can barely see it, because of all the people standing in the way. His uncle bends over the hood showing something to the youngsters, but then stands up straight, a clear head height above the others, fixes an eye on his nephew, and shouts to him.

Henry gets the urge to turn and run, or just walk past pretending he didn't hear anything, but that would be no good, they already made eye contact, which means his uncle will tell his mother if he starts behaving oddly.

"Henry Oliver!" his uncle shouts while waving. "Come here! I have something to show you!"

Henry looks at the others. One of the boys he fought with on the day of the incident with the ladies boots is standing there. He's one of those boys the girls are always looking at. Henry crosses the sand-covered street, and around a pothole still full of water from last night's rain. He blinks, and tries to think of something clever to say, but what might that be?

"Hey, how nice to see you here!" says his uncle jovially, placing a hand on Henry's shoulder. The others step aside and make room for him. They don't dare not to, with his uncle standing there. "Take a look, at this!" he says, resting his hand on the roof of the car. Henry leans across and peers through the windscreen. The black leather seat. The steering wheel, moulded on the inside to fit one's fingers perfectly. All of the buttons and levers.

"Isn't it nice?" his uncle asks.

Henry nods, while his uncle walks round the car and opens the driver's door.

“I thought I’d take her for a test ride. Would you like to come with me, Henry Oliver?” his uncle asks, smiling playfully. The others look at him enviously, Henry cannot hold back the smile now spreading across his face.

“Yes please!” he replies. “When?”

“Hmm..” his uncle replies, dragging it out a little more, absorbing all the attention coming from the boys and a lady trundling by with a pram on the far side of the street. “How about now?”

“Now?” Henry replies.

“Yes! Now is the best possible time. Jump in!”

His uncle opens the door on his side, and Henry takes the handle, as his heart pounds in his chest. The gang of boys are stood so close they could hit him, push him. But they wouldn’t do that now? With his uncle there? He opens the car door, causing them all to take a few steps back, and sits down inside this gleaming wonder of metal, wood, glass and leather, in which only *he* has permission to sit. He carefully pulls the door shut so as not to damage it. Then he looks out of the window, sees the envy in their faces, and feels the pride rising within, because this is all they got. They were offered nothing more than just *looking* at the car. But he is now sitting in it, he is getting to *drive* in it, Henry thinks, stroking his hand over the teak dashboard, and its shiny polished steel trimmings.

His uncle turns to him.

“Are you ready?” he asks, and Henry nods nervously, but excitedly. Of course he is ready. At that very moment his uncle turns the key, and rouses the motor from its sleep, pushes his foot down on the pedal, revving the engine which sends a roar of noise out from under the hood in front of them. Then he places his hand on the gearstick, pushes it to the left and into a notch, and off they drive down Sjøgata, away from the boys. They take a left into Kirkegata, and roll through town as people turn and stare.

“Watch this,” says his uncle, and he shows Henry how to change gear, how to steer, and how to accelerate. He demonstrates how he can flick a little switch, and make the wipers sweep the windscreen. And outside, the people and houses glide by, as if they belonged to another world.

“Have you ever driven a car before Henry Oliver?” his uncle asks, once they are a little further out of town.

Henry shakes his head, and his uncle takes hold of his hand.

“Well, then you steer for a bit,” he says, placing Henry’s hand on the wheel. Henry jumps, and tries to pull his arm back, but his uncle just laughs, says: “Come on Henry, it’s ok!” Henry

realizes that he has no choice, and moreover he really wants to, so he leans across, places his other hand on the wheel, and then he is steering! For a brief moment *he* is the one driving the car, while the road is hurtling towards them. For several minutes *he* is the one in control, as he swerves round a hole in the road, and follows the bends, all the way back to the shop. Then his uncle takes the wheel again, saying that Henry can let go now, and pulls up in front of the shop. The boys are gone.

They fall silent in the car. Henry sits with his palms flat against his thighs, as he does in school. His uncle clears his throat, pulls out a cigarette and taps it on his knee.

“Now then, Henry Oliver. That wasn’t so bad was it?”

“No. It certainly wasn’t,” replies Henry, smiling. “Thank you!”

“You’re welcome. Want one?” asks his uncle, handing him the cigarette box. A beautiful tin box with an Arabian palace on the lid, and the lettering of the word *Medina* snaking round one of the domes.

“Erm ... I don’t know,” replies Henry, because although he has tried smoking before, with cigarettes stolen from his parents, he has never sat like this, being treated like an adult. He blinks a couple of times, and decides to take one. Lights it up and feels it burn in his chest as he inhales.

“So, Henry Oliver?” asks his uncle, blowing a cloud of smoke towards the windscreen, where it spreads in all directions and evaporates “How is my nephew doing?”

“I ... I’m doing fine, thanks,” Henry replies, taking a drag himself.

“Yes, I hear you’re doing well at school ... but aside from that? You don’t do any sport or anything, do you?”

Henry shakes his head. He exhales and takes another drag, straight after the previous one, immediately aware of how nervous it must make him look. He cannot even manage to hold the cigarette a relaxed manner. Not like his uncle, who wears his cigarette as if it was an extension of his hand, like it quite naturally poked out between his index and middle finger.

“No, I’m not really interested in that sort of thing,” replies Henry glancing up at his uncle to see how he will react.

His uncle looks straight ahead. Nodding quite calmly, does not look disappointed. It seems he doesn’t consider this as a problem, as far as Henry is concerned.

“Very well. Then you must have a fair amount of time on your hands ... even though I’m sure you spend some time with your friends. Right?”

Henry nods once more, and takes another drag. The ash begins to grow dangerously long. I mustn’t let it fall off and make a mess in the car, he thinks. His uncle winds down the window.

There is a little handle on the door, that in itself is quite amazing, Henry thinks, winding the handle on his own side, watching how the window slides down into a slit in the door, and disappears. His uncle flicks his cigarette ash outside. Henry smiles and does the same.

“Our business” his uncle says, while pointing at the shop right beside them.

“Yes?”

“We could need some help, actually. Sverre and I. We’ve discussed it several times, that it would be great to have an part-time assistant. Would that be of interest to you?”

“Yes! Thank you, of course I’d be interested!” replies Henry, smiling nervously. Noticing how his facial muscles aren’t quite keeping up, because this is huge. Imagine if he could start working there. Properly!

“Great, I’ll talk to your mother about it. Would you be able to start tomorrow, see how things go?”

“Tomorrow?” asks Henry.

“Yeah, why not? There’s no reason to wait, is there?.”

Henry nods quickly again, he can hardly believe that this is real, that he’s actually sitting here, in this car, being offered a job! His uncle allows the smoke to snake out in a narrow stripe, before flicking the stub out of the open window.

Henry runs home to break the news to his father who seems to be lacking enthusiasm, most likely jealous that his wife’s brother have done so well in life, thinks Henry. Then he realizes that his father probably knew about this already, that his mother must have been the one who made this happen.

The following morning Henry is ready. His father has polished his shoes for him, a form of apology, and he walks beside the church yard, and round the corner towards the shop and garage. He has been there a hundred times before and knows how it looks, and where everything is.

Even if Henry had to close his eyes, he would be able to describe in detail the interior with its wooden bench stretching the length of the room, and the brown cash register, with its buttons and levers and a black, wooden crank on the side that has to be pulled down half-way to release the spring that opens the drawer, and shoots it towards him. He would be able to describe the backpacks hanging in the window, and not least, he would be able to recount every detail on the Model T Ford on display in the window beside them. A marvel of black metal, gleaming chrome and wooden, chestnut brown. What he would *not* be able to articulate, is the feeling of lifting the clerk coat from the hook, slipping his arms into it and seeing himself in the mirror, transformed into someone else. He would not be able to describe how the nervousness vanishes

as he pulls on his uniform, and how his associations with the outfit change him, and bring him a new, unfamiliar form of confidence. Suddenly it's easy making smalltalk with strangers, listening to their stories, helping them figure out what they need. He who is usually so quiet, so timid, notices how words and phrases come easy to him, and lets him see people in a different way. He draws a veil over all that he's harbouring, and slips into the role of the world's best shop assistant. Someone who knows where every item is placed. Someone who knows which customers can be tempted to make an extra purchase, a pair of gloves or mittens for example, or some tools or chain oil for someone who needs to fix his bike anyways. He can loosen the rope pulleys along the wall and lower down goods hanging from the rafters. He can make people feel welcome. He can return home with money for his mother, feeling almost dumbfounded at how the confidence and competence that come with the uniform, seems to vanish again the moment he removes it. Then he is just Henry Oliver again, who sneaks back home, as quickly as he can, to avoid being spotted by any of the gangs.

Neither had he ever imagined the pleasure he would get from lifting off the hose at the pump on the rare occasions a customer needed petrol. Nor of smelling the alluring fragrance of petroleum, emitting a gas that makes the air vibrate and assume another, more physical form, like a mirage, before gushing into the car beside him, where it will be transformed, turned into speed, and sound, and joy.

A month passes. Henry's uncle heaps praise on him, as does Sverre Hveding himself, and his mother is truly grateful for the money he brings home. He spend his afternoons in the garage in the backyard. Learns what every car part is called, and what function it has, spends as much time in there as he can, under the hood, with his hands covered in oil. There's just one snag amongst all the joy of his new daily life: The salary is too meager. After the money for food for him and his siblings, and for the repayments on his parents' loan has been deducted, there is nothing left for Henry to spend on himself. He could ask his mother if he could keep some of it of course, just a tiny bit, but he won't, he doesn't dare to, because as soon as the thought hits him, he imagines his mother in the kitchen, pictures her shaking her head and looking sternly at him while listing all the things that the family needs. He would have no argument, of course he cannot win that discussion. She would never understand how much it would mean to him to be able tell his class-mates that he'd would love to join them at the temperance cafe, and buy a hot chocolate or a bun. He must always make up an excuse, he can't make it this time, he has to go home.

He *should* have asked if he could keep some of the money, but he cannot. So he continues life as an outsider, separated from the others and all the things they are able to do, because his

mother knows exactly what he earns, and there is no way of skimming off a little for himself, for a quick trip to the café, or an extra treat. *It's so unfair!* he starts thinking, on his way to the shop. Why should *he* always be the one left out, no matter how hard he works? It's not fair. Those who get things in life, get *everything*. Those who are born tall, good-looking and confident; they have money as well. The other boys his age can all afford to visit the café on the high street, where anyone who is anyone meets. They can buy cigarettes, chocolate, and cinema tickets. It's only *him* who must remain separate from it all, like a fish trapped in an aquarium, able to see what is happening on the other side of the glass, but never able to step out and participate in the conversation like the others. Never. Ever. No matter how much he works. It's only *him* who is never invited to birthday parties, never picked for the football team, never noticed by the girls. Only *him* walking round in over-sized clothes handed down from his cousins. Trousers that have to be shortened, and jacket sleeves rolled up so that his hands don't disappear into them, and resemble little animal noses poking out of a cave, checking to see if it is safe outside.

Sverre Hveding will never raise his salary, even though the business is going fantastically, so that the rich owner can strut about in a suit and waistcoat, and drive around in his own car. Even though the turnover has increased considerably since Henry began, because he is so good at his job. It isn't fair, he thinks, stroking his finger along the side of the cash-register, and then he begins to think about all the coins sitting in there, right there on the other side of the cold metal. At once an idea hits him, clear and simple, because there is one solution to putting all of this straight. A simple way of raising his salary to a level where it really *should* be, ensuring that Henry get's what he deserves: All it takes is to not register a few of the sales, and keeping the money, as a kind of tip, since he is so efficient and the person to thank for so much of the increased profit. Just trifling amounts, so small they will never be noticed. It won't make the slightest difference for the shop owner. But for *him*? For Henry it will mean he can go to the café like all the others. For him it's decisive to whether he's on the inside or not. He's earned the money anyway.

Henry places his hands on either side of the cash-register and glances over at the door to the back-room. He sees Sverre Hveding bent over some paperwork, with a cloud of cigarette smoke rising over the writing desk. His uncle has gone out, or is in the store-room. Then a customer enters the shop. An elderly man. Someone perfect to practice on, he thinks, as his heart thumps in his chest. But he doesn't let his nervousness show, stands attentively, smiles and greets the man politely, just like he always does. Makes sure he keeps both hands on the counter, stands up straight, and speaks in a high and clear voice while scrutinising the man. He notices how

absent-minded and inattentive the white-haired customer seems, how he fumbles about in his coat pocket to find something to wipe away the glistening drop hanging from his nostril.

Then the money comes out, and the opportunity.

It's quite simple. All he has to do is keep his finger in the cash drawer when he closes it, and wait until the old codger has left the shop, before sneaking the money into his trouser pocket with a flat hand.

In the seconds after, with the bell over the door still jangling loudly, with his heart beating hard in his chest and his right hand gripping the coins, it's as though the sale never happened. But the money is definitely there, and after work he takes a stroll near the places he knows the other boys usually hang about. He meets someone from his class, a quiet boy who is not very popular either, and asks if he wants to go to the café. On me, Henry says, and thankfully the boy accepts. So off they go, with Henry still gripping tightly round the coins, and with a huge smile on his face.

The café is run by the abstinence movement, so there are no beers or spirits on the tables, but you can smoke there, and tell stories. He buys two cups of hot chocolate, noticing the looks from the others in there and hears the fantastic hum of voices, laughter and coffee sets. His friend takes him to a table where several others they know. Henry takes a seat, trying to hide how nervous he is and just listens, while sipping his drink. One of them is talking about a film, about a cowboy who saves an entire town. Everyone is listening to him. Then, during a quiet moment, Henry seizes the moment, and asks if they have heard a story that *he* has read about in one of the magazines. The others look up from their cups, without any hint of sarcasm. Quite the opposite in fact, they listen, and say *no, which one was that?*

It's almost as if the boys had been sitting there waiting for someone to walk in and entertain them, because they listen intently to every single word, totally engrossed, as Henry retells the story of a dusty little-town in America, a bank robbery, and a suitcase full of money. He keeps them captivated by his stare, drawing them closer, talking so quietly that they have sit on the edge of their seats in order to hear what happens, if they want to keep up with every detail. The story begins with characters from the magazine he's reading, but soon *he* becomes the main character, and no one at the table reacts to this sudden change in roles, no one flinches when Henry is part of the story now, because *he* has their full attention now, no one else.

Soon he has to go, back home to eat dinner, but as he stands up, one of the other boys asks if he will be back tomorrow.

"Yes, of course," answers Henry casually, as if it was the most normal thing in the world. "Nice place, this," he says. And then he leaves, with nothing but joy and pride welling up inside,



and for the entire walk home he knows what he has to do the next day. He has to pocket a little more cash, enough to go back to the café. And while he ambles home, he's already planning what story he'll tell them all next time.

It goes on like that, for the rest of the year. He is careful. Mindful to never take too much from the cash-register, to never fall foul of temptation, even though there's no sign of him being discovered. No. Just small amounts. Just enough for him to afford dropping by the café, and to be able to join the others at the cinema now and then. To be able to follow the crowd of expectant youths into the movie theatre, hear the murmur of voices, and watch the red velvet curtain sweep aside like an eye slowly opening, leading the way into another world. Cinema is so realistic now that the characters have begun to speak, and the guns, the doors and the cars have all started making noise. You are almost *dragged* into the screen and turned into the main character. The music, images and dialogue, it makes him feel as though he is right there, in the middle of all the drama, feeling the tension as if it was his own. But it costs a whole crown to get in, and that means he has to steal more money than before, smile politely to the customers, and make sure to keep them chatting about the weather or whatever it might be, while his finger casually holds the cash drawer open. *Thank you so much, and see you again!* A tinkling of bells over the door, and the coins can be slid back out of the drawer and into his pocket, where they lie, totally quiet, yet full of power, glowing with possibilities. But then.

One afternoon when he is alone in the shop, the door is suddenly thrown open, and two boys from school walk in. Two of those who used to torment him just because they could. They must have been waiting for him to be alone. Chosen a time they know that both his uncle and Sverre Hveding would be out, and when most people in town are busy having lunch. Henry feels his heart pounding in his diaphragm.

"So! This is where you're hiding?" one of them asks, while approaching the counter. "How has a pygmy like you managed to climb so high in life?"

The other boy starts to laugh, a series of small giggles, before he places the flat of his hand against his lips and pretends to be an American indian.

Henry doesn't respond. He cannot allow them see how much the words sting him. The older of the two boys grabs a hook normally used to lift bicycles when they are being repaired. Then he dives over the counter. Henry tries to struggle free, but the boy grabs his hands and pulls his arms back across the counter, leaving Henry with his face pressed against the woodwork.

"What are you doing?!" Henry asks in dismay.

"We're just helping the pygmy move up little bit higher in life," replies the boy standing behind him, straining over the last word, as he pulls hard on a hook suspended from a pulley

hung from the roof. Then he feels something being pushed through his belt loops, and a feeling of cold steel inside his shirt. Fumbling hands, and the stinging feeling of rope against his skin, dry and scratchy.

The boy in front of him lets go of his arms, and for a moment Henry is free. Then the boys start hauling the rope. Henry's trousers tighten at the seams, and he is hoisted up, rotating several times, as the counter and cash register get smaller, until he's flailing around under the roof, several metres above the others.

"So, how's the view from up there?" one of them asks. Henry doesn't answer. Refuses to give them that pleasure.

"You just kick your legs, little frog-man! Someone will come and change your diaper and comfort you soon enough!" the other one shouts, his eyes lighting up with laughter, while he secures the rope to the wall. Then they both walk out.

The bell jingles again, and the fair-haired boy sticks his head round the door again and shouts "Thanks! Have nice day!" before the door clicks shut, and their footsteps crunch on the gravel outside.

Henry dangles there, in total silence.

How long is he going to have to be trapped like this before someone finds him? And what will he say to them? How is he going to cope with all the gossiping this will lead to, from neighbour to neighbour all over Levanger? Fuck those bastards! Fuck all this hassle and bullying! *It never ends*, he thinks while trying to twist himself round, but unfortunately he can't quite get his fingers on the rope, in fact his swinging around causes the rope to graze his lower back, it almost burns, and he feels the desperation building, feels the tears welling up in him, but he refuses to cry. *I'm not going to give them the fucking pleasure*, he thinks, while clenching his teeth. He screws up his eyes and breaths deeply through his nose as he forces back the tears, because he will avenge this. *Just fucking wait*, he thinks, and in his imagination, what had just happened, starts to change. He imagines the two bullies walking in, just as obnoxious and revolting as they were in reality, but in his daydream what happened next is quite different: As they lean across the counter, Henry stops them by standing bolt upright, and giving them a cold stare.

"What are you doing here?!" he shouts, noticing how uneasy they look. "If you're not here to buy anything, then get the fuck out!" he says. "Don't waste my time! Do you hear me?!"

Henry smiles to himself, as he pictures them glancing nervously at each other, totally unsure about what to do next, now that things aren't going to plan, because they hadn't expected this! One of them tries to grab his shirt-collar, but Henry is too fast. He twists quickly out of reach,

as though in a fast-motion film, before jerking his elbow back and smashing his fist into the other boy's nose. Hard and precise. Suddenly the tough guy isn't so tough anymore, and instead stumbles backwards in disbelief holding his hands to his face, with tears streaming from his eyes. Then the other one tries to throw a punch, but Henry ducks – no, actually, he doesn't duck! – he grabs hold of an ashtray sitting on the counter, a cut-glass ashtray, full of crumpled nub-ends and ash, and smashes it into the other boy's cheek! So hard that there's a crunch of cheekbone and gristle and teeth, and cigarette ends flying everywhere! And what a pleasure it is! What a triumph to see those two bastards falling apart, and crawling away gasping, spitting blood and teeth from their mouths, because now they have both been neutralised.

After that Henry simply jumps over the shop counter. A gallant little leap, so he can grab them by their jackets and drag them towards the door like insubordinate little brats.

Time and space cease to exist while these scenes play out in his mind, over and over again, with slight variations. His trousers begin chafing his groin on either side, and every time he tries to move, the rope rubs against the skin under his arms and along his sides. How long has he been hanging there when the door finally opens? Henry lifts his head, and sees an old man enter the shop. Luckily it's not one of the regular customers, no one he will see frequently and be reminded of this humiliation.

“Dear God, what on earth happened?” he asks, hurrying behind the counter to untie the knot.

“It was just a joke,” replies Henry with a smirk explaining to the stranger that it was just a prank between friends, and that the others are sure to come back at any moment. The man seems to believe him, and Henry manages to smile and laugh about it all while being lowered to the ground. He returns the rope to its rightful place and quickly goes to assist the customer with the items he needs, before anyone else comes in.

Then he takes money from the cash-register, more than ever before, because he has someone in mind, someone that might help him. A guy who sells things illegally, and is said to be able to get hold of anything between heaven and earth if you have the right money.

Soon Henry's uncle returns, and asks if everything is going alright. Then he sits down in the back room to work on the new orders, read the newspaper, and smoke.

More customers enter the shop, looking for balls, pumps and weights, and Henry helps himself to a little more cash, stuffing it into his trouser pocket. Finally, he hangs up his jacket, and closes up the shop, while shouting goodbye to his uncle.

A few hours later Henry buys his first gun.

C for the café Gerson stops at on his way to Trondheim, a roadside-café deep in the pine forest. He's not really hungry, but they have driven quite far already, and when the sign pops up he is suddenly unsure of how many hours it might be until the next possible food-stop. Ellen's head droops slowly forward as the car begins to brake, then she blinks her eyes and looks up at him. Jannicke still lies there with her head in her mother's lap, her eyes closed, dark curls and big white cheeks. Just think that it ended up being just us, he thinks. That he and Ellen would be together. He would never have guessed it if anyone had asked him before the war, but she is very beautiful, he thinks, and from a solid family background. Without question a good family, with a tobacco factory in Torggata, and a villa with cars and chauffeurs and seamstresses. Even though most of that vanished during the war, there's always hope of getting some of it back, he thinks. In any case neither of them had that much of a choice, thinks Gerson, while the gravel crunches under the tyres, because there were not too many young people in the refugee camp in Sweden, and who else than the women there would consider him? Who would want to date a Norwegian refugee, a jew? His mother had her part in it too, steering them towards each other by inviting Ellen's family round for coffee, and making sure that they did things together. Grete's twin sister already had a boyfriend, but Ellen was available and so they ended up together.

His mother had been unable to hide her disappointment over how little of the money was given back to the family at the end of the war and they could finally move back. For a moment he imagines a different life, picturing himself at the university, working away on a new project. He pictures himself winning a prize in a mathematics competition, and then immediately blinks the images away again, because that was another life, one which cannot be his, he thinks. It is yet another thing the war has destroyed, but he cannot complain, he has no right to, he thinks, because he is still alive. He wasn't transported to a concentration camp on board the Donau, or imprisoned in Falstad, as so many others. He is alive, unharmed, and this life, despite everything, isn't so bad.

"Where are we?" asks Ellen.

"I thought we could stop and eat a little," Gerson replies, with his upper body still twisted round in his seat. Ellen places a hand on Jannicke's cheek, and strokes the hair away from her forehead.

"Good idea," she says, smiling warmly, looking quite pretty at that moment, with her eyes aglow, and with an openness that gives him a stab of bad conscience. For a split second Gerson considers telling her about the house they are moving into.

"Ellen?" he says.

“Hm?” replies Ellen dreamily, letting go of his hand again, and lifting the sleeping bundle from her lap.

“Were you going to say something?” she asks.

Gerson shakes his head, and looks at his beautiful daughter lying there, so innocent, so pure.

“Time to wake up, my little treasure,” she says. And then his daughter draws several breaths in a succession of short jolts, as if her sleep was an abyss she had just poked her head up from, and with that, the opportunity to say something was gone.

# D

D for the doves in the sky above Falstad, that sometimes fly in formation over the meadows and fields, in an undulating dance with the sky.

D for the drinking of the off-duty prison guards at Falstad, and the lightness it released in their voices. Their laughter often reaches the cell where you are lying, causing you to recall snippets of your childhood, when you lay like that in bed listening to the sound of grown-ups when your parents threw parties, and their voices changed, became louder, happier. It's like that with the German soldiers. Sometimes you get the punchline of a joke and start smiling to yourself, almost involuntarily, before you turn around, and try to disappear into sleep.

D for Dora, the name of the U-boat base Hitler planned to establish just outside Trondheim. Built in concrete and never completed, but converted into the National Archives a few years after the war ended, because of its massive walls. I read all about Dora and its history, parallel to my researching Rinnan's childhood, and my search for answers to this family mystery. Because why was it *you* who was picked out? Was it really just the allegation about you spreading news from the BBC, or was there more to it? How was your name revealed in the first place?

D for the dance halls in the area where Henry grows up, where the boys would saunter nonchalantly over to the girls, and with a self-evident confidence start chatting to them, seemingly unaffected by whether they are rejected or not. How do they do it? thinks Henry, again and again, while standing on the periphery of one of these events, observing what happens. How they manage to appear so indifferent, so worldly-wise?

Henry doesn't have the nerve to approach any of the girls. But he goes along anyway, as their driver, since none of the others have a license, and they definitely doesn't have a car they

can borrow in order to drive around looking for a party, so Henry does the driving, both to the dancehall, and back home again later the evening. Just like this particular Saturday. It's late, and it's been a successful night. The boys in the back seat talk wildly, one louder than the other, about that night's escapades, but Henry doesn't listen. He just presses his foot on the accelerator and revels in the fantastic sensation that comes from it, as the car speeds along Kjerreveien, so fast that the gravel sprays into the air, and the trees fly past in a blur on either side. Just a light push with his shoe is all that's needed for all the power hidden under the black hood to be unleashed. A wild dance of pistons and exploding petrol hammering down on the crankshaft. Whipping the wheels forward, along Landeveien in the dark, on the way home from the party.

Every Friday or Saturday they drive to a new place. Houses and people float by, the boys sail on a wave of joy, expectation and camaraderie, right up until they arrive at the dancehall. But even though it's a new place each time, the atmosphere is just the same. The lighting, and the music which drifts from the entrance is the same everywhere, a hum of life and desire and adolescence. The way the men stagger around, drunkenly through the long grass, is the same in every town. As is the laughter, of the girls standing bunched together, in light summer dresses, with their hair tied up in a buns, and their hips and breasts pressing against the fabric. The overt lechery and greediness of the men who slip their arms round these women and pull them towards them, is the same wherever they go.

How much would he not give to own that arm, where it now lies nonchalantly across that thin dress, and then stroke his his fingertips downwards, feeling every inch of her body through the fabric? What would he not give to own those eyes, as she turns to the man leaning up against the wall over there? To own those lips as she leans back halfway and allows herself to be kissed?

It's no good. There's no point trying to enter the venue at all, because who would dance with a man so short that his face would be pressed against her breasts? A guy so short that she would just stand there lit up like a beacon of embarrassment, a full head taller than her partner? His height is an obstacle. So, he just pulls the car up, and parks outside the dancehall without getting out of the car, and when the others ask if Henry wants to join them, he gives them a mischievous grin, then tells them he already has a date with a woman nearby.

His friends disappear into the party, and Henry drives on.

Sometimes he parks somewhere by the roadside.

Other times he drives around, aimlessly.

In his fantasy, things are different.

In his fantasy the gravel crunches under the wheels as Henry pulls into the drive of a nearby farmstead, then parks outside a white-painted house, beside a red-painted barn, with a thicket

of raspberry bushes next to it. A lamp arches its head from the wall, and the insects buzz around in the golden light. Henry knocks on the door, and a few seconds pass while he pulls off his leather gloves with his teeth, and places them suavely in his coat pocket. Then the woman who lives there opens the door. She nearly always resembles Greta Garbo, only a bit shorter. Henry has seen the Swedish actress's films over and over again. He has stroked his finger over the face on the film poster, and when no one is looking, over her breasts, down to her stomach, and then down to her crotch, hidden under the picture of her tight-fitting dress. Greta Garbo came from a poor background too, from nothing, but just look at what she has become! World famous, sophisticated and well dressed, always so elegant and sensual, as she was in *Mata Hari*, where she played the role of a spy who seduces men with her dancing, then dupes them into giving away information, before ending up in front of the firing-squad and being shot. The scene is both heartbreaking and gruesome, but luckily it's only this character that dies, not the actress, so Greta Garbo can pop up later, in other films, as well as in Henry's fantasies, and in the facial expressions of the women he looks at. She is sometimes present, in the form of women that resemble her, on occasions when he has driven the other boys to a party somewhere.

The lonely woman in the secluded house, smiles teasingly and reaches for his hand. She is warm and soft and willing. Sometimes they do it right there in the hallway, inside the door, with her dressed pulled up to her belly, and her wearing high-heeled shoes. Other times she drags him into the bedroom, and unbuttons her blouse, slowly revealing her bra, and he strokes his hands over her breasts. Watches her completely undress, right in front of him.

These daydreams are so realistic that sometimes he has to reach down into his trousers while sitting there, alone in the woods, and start touching himself, loosely at first, fumblingly, and then harder, faster, while yet another woman that resembles Greta Garbo lies down in front of him on the bed, her long blonde hair spread across the pillows, and there, at the edge of the woods, a short distance from the car, he comes inside her, into this warm, wetness that he has never experienced in reality, but which sends waves of heat through his entire body, until the sperm shoots out into the dark, and hangs in threads from the leaves and the twigs. Then he snaps out of his daydream again, suddenly back at the roadside, in the bushes, with his trousers round his knees. He wipes his hands on the grass. Looks for a stream or a puddle where he can wash away the sticky globs from his skin, holds his hand to his nose to make sure the smell has gone, scrubs his hands with some leaves, checks the time, and then carries on waiting.

The other boys stare in envy and disbelief when Henry tells them about his encounters with these older and more experienced women. These stories, which he shares in the car afterwards, are so vivid and detailed that it's as though these women really exist. That's how it feels on



this particular Saturday night, as they drive home in the dark. They have been in Namsos, and he has just told the others about his latest escapade. Seen how agog they are simply from hearing about it, how jealous they become, these boys who have only danced and kissed.

The straw by the roadside flickers past in the car headlights. The boys in the back seat scream and laugh, hyped up from everything they've done, while exchanging little details, reveling in saying the names of some of the women, followed by a conclusion they all seem to agree on, some comment about her breasts, followed by another burst of raucous laughter. They have so much fun, such amazing fun. But for him, who's driving the car, this is not much fun to listen to at all. Quite the opposite! They sit there talking about things only they have experienced. They leave him out, when *he* is the only reason that they get to these dance halls in the first place. Only *he* has access to a car, yet still they sit there like a gang of Cockatoos chattering away happily, without a care, without involving him in the conversation, as though he was just their private chauffeur!

Well, they'll see. *If I'm only their driver, at least I'm going have some fun*, thinks Henry, licking his lips. He tightens his grip on the wheel with the driving gloves he bought with his own money, leather gloves with holes in the knuckles, like the ones racing drivers use, skin tight around his fingers, transforming him every time he wears them. Now he leans right over the steering wheel, and hits the accelerator. Listening to the rising sound of the revs, as the pistons struggle so hard to keep pace that he has to press in the clutch and change gear. Bushes fly past in the headlights, occasionally thrashing the side of the car. They stop laughing in the back. He sees the grins vanish from their faces. The dirt road is hard and bumpy, and the pot-holes, carved out by the rain, shudder through the bodywork.

"Easy Henry!" says one of his friends, the one who normally takes the lead and does most of the talking, while clinging to the back of the driver's seat with both hands. "We're not in any hurry!"

Henry smiles at him in the mirror, and sees the fear in his eyes.

"What's wrong? Are you scared?" asks Henry, pressing the accelerator even harder, feeling how the car shakes round the bends, how the centrifugal force takes grip, pressing their bodies to one side.

Faster and faster.

His friend doesn't reply. None of the others speak either. They just lean back again, and cling on tightly. The needle on the speedometer creeps upwards, and now they are approaching a long straight section, a chance to really see how fast this car can go, he thinks, changing gear again. Then something in the headlights grabs his attention. Two glowing eyes, right down on

the road surface, a cat perhaps, but then he sees the rest of the animal. It's a hare, sitting in the middle of the road. A furry target, an unexpected prize, like a teddy-bear at the fairground.

"Watch this, boys! It'll be hare steak for dinner tomorrow!" he shouts, pushing his foot to the floor as hard as he can.

"Henry!" shouts one of the others, the one sitting in the front passenger seat, who almost never says anything, but Henry doesn't answer, he just hunches over the wheel for the two seconds it lasts, this moment of joy, speed, and excitement, while the car roars towards the little furry creature sitting there stupefied.

But then.

The hare suddenly jumps aside, bounces right into the bushes by the road, and it can't do that, it's not allowed to do that, thinks Henry, swerving after it, it's not getting away, it's not going to outwit him, no fucking way, he thinks, while twisting the wheel and taking aim, certain he's going to make it.

Then it all happens so fast.

The hare vanishes from the headlights.

A friend in the back seat screams his name, loudly.

Then the car veers off the road and tips over. A crash, then a bang on the side, and he is suddenly lying with his face pressed against the door. The car leans at an angle against a stone. There are shards of glass in his lap, and a large crack snaking across the windscreen. Someone groans. Curses.

Henry opens and closes his eyes several times, feels the pain in his chest caused by the steering wheel. He's lying against the car door, on top of his arm, which aches. But he's alive, he's alive, and he can at least move his arms and legs, he thinks, so it cannot be too serious, now it's just a question of keeping face. Now is not the time to think about what will happen when he shows this wreck to his uncle, he cannot think about that now, because then everything will unravel, now he has to act like nothing happened. He turns his head, looks at the friend in the seat beside him, sitting with shards of glass in his lap and the folds of his jacket. The boy holds his hands to his face. It is bleeding.

"Now then. Is there any life back there?" he asks, making sure his voice sounds totally unaffected, as tough as always. But he gets no reply other than a few wordless whimpers and groans.

"Ok. I'll be damned. There'll be no hare steak tomorrow," Henry mumbles, winding down the window. Luckily the door isn't damaged, so he manages to open it all the way down, and crawl out. The friend sat beside him follows him out, his nosebleed dripping onto the door.

Henry stands up, and brushes the splinters of glass from his trousers. The two boys in the back seat climb hunched out of the car. One of them has his teeth clenched, and holds his forearm as though it's broken.

“That fucking hare!” says Henry. “Why did it jump out of the way? Just as I was about to hit it?!”

The other boys look at him dubiously.

“Well don't just stand there complaining!” Henry shouts. “Help me to get this cart back on the road!”

He walks over to the door on the driver's side and grabs hold of the metal. The others wander groggily towards the trunk, and stand there in single file. There is a servile look in their eyes, almost as though they are unable to do anything unless Henry asks them to. They push when he tells them to push, they wait when he orders them to, and they push even harder when Henry shouts at them while the car rolls up the embankment again, and they finally get back on the road.

Everyone gets in. It is quiet. The motor starts. Henry turns round, demanding their full attention. If any of them tell Sverre Hveding what led to the crash, he will lose his job, and that means he'll never be able to borrow the car again, and then he'll end up being left out again.

“Listen, and I'll tell you what just happened,” Henry says in a quiet voice, making sure everyone is listening closely. “There was no hare. There has NEVER BEEN a hare. Right?”

“What do you mean ...?” one of them asks, and Henry gives him a hard stare, like the heroes always do in the films he has seen, taking control over the situation.

“Listen very carefully,” he says. “There was another car, and it came driving right at us. Way too fast. So fast that we saw nothing more than dazzling lights. An idiot driver, who forced us off the road, who didn't stop, even though he must have seen that we ended up in a ditch. That is what happened ... Is that understood!?” he asks.

They look up at him confused, as if this should be difficult to grasp. “Is that understood, I said!?” Henry repeats, louder now, and everyone nods, and replies in stammering voices: “Yes, Henry Oliver.”

No one dares to stand up. It's quite incredible, he thinks. All the bravado and manliness is gone from their faces, and suddenly they are no more than terrified kids standing before their father.

D for the dew that clings to the grass in the morning outside the prison camp, making the ground sparkle in the sunlight.

D for the date January 12th, 1942, and for the drama in Marie Komissar's voice, when she calls Gerson just this day. The trembling seriousness when she says the words that change everything: "They've taken your father!"