IRMGARD ROSINA BAUER

**Muttl on the road**

About the author:

Irmgard Rosina Bauer was born in Munich in 1956 "and never got away from it," as she herself says about her roots in Munich, where she still lives today. She is all the more enthusiastic about exploring new landscapes, countries and cities on her travels, only to return again and again. After studying education and working in several professions, she fulfilled an old wish on her sixtieth birthday: to work as an author and write books about life, travel and life's journeys. With this second volume of Rosi's travel narratives, she brings out her fourth book. In five short stories, she humorously and sensitively illustrates how the relationship between mother and adult children must inevitably change. What could illustrate this better than traveling together?

You can find many photos and background information at www.irmgardrosina.de.

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IRMGARD ROSINA BAUER

**Muttl on the road**

**A MOTHER LEARNS WHILE TRAVELING**

**WITH AND TO HER ADULT**

**CHILDREN TO LET GO**

Rosi's travel stories volume 2

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For Hannes

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**Before**

Since my four children are out of the house, I love to travel.

When my four children were still small, traveling was associated with the highest effort. It was more my husband who liked to discover new places, while I always wanted to go to the same place. Where I knew how far the next lake was and whether the children could go there on their own, whether the kitchen was equipped with a "bottle stove", whether the room had a travel bed and how big it was, with or without a pillow, whether my little one would sleep in it or not and whether - whether - whether ...

You'll stay a mommy all your life. And when the children grow up, you read everywhere: You have to let go of the children. But the caring gene is ingrained in us. The child should always be happy. It should always laugh, and preferably never cry, because mom can hardly stand to watch it. Mom has to get through it and hopefully find comforting words. Even when the children are grown up and have lovesickness, when it doesn't work out with the driver's license at the first time, when the first car has an engine failure. Even when they lose their job, when a relationship breaks up, when their wallet is stolen or they want to come home drunk from a club but fall asleep on the S-Bahn and end up in the S-Bahn station nightclub and their cell phone has no credit.

I'm mom whether I'm at home or away. Whether I'm traveling or at the stove. I'm always thinking about the kids. Are they taken care of? Are they doing well? Where and when do they need me? But sometimes it's also like this: I just want to get away. I hope they don't need me.

And then again: I've planned a trip in the apartment - and then comes: "Mom, can you take the little one off my hands for half a week?" Sure I can. And postpone the departure.

Can we moms still be saved? Only if we go away anyway. Then go away together with the children. With individual kids, as a couple, with all of them together. Even if they can already come themselves from their everyday work. What happiness mom feels at the moment when they are all together! It is possible even without her physical presence - just with the thoughts of her in the luggage.

I love traveling. I treat myself to it. And I experience the most exciting things. Especially when I'm traveling with them, the children, who make me braver than I would be alone. It is and remains exciting with the children!

And again, as I sit here on this great and varied beach, it occurs to me: I haven't even written to the kids yet about how I'm doing and how beautiful it is here. And I've already been here for a week. But now I quickly wrote a message and sent it! After all, my kids should always know where I am and how they can reach me if they need me, their mommy.

**Where is the horizon?**

Muttl ante portas

My son Raffael, to whom I am on my way, is twenty-six. In June, he hung up his secure job and quit his apartment in Munich for the same date. He bought a converted VW bus from a retired couple for the money he had saved. The couple had already been on the road with it for thirty years. He now lives in it. Raffael, who travels alone, is proud of his achievement: he considers his car a luxury object, because the bus is practically equipped for use by two people.

After having driven through the festivals of Germany in the summer, he was now dreading the coming winter. In southern Spain, however, wintering was good, he had learned from other festival mobilists.

The last days before his departure Raffael stood with his bus in our street. He enjoyed again Du-sche and mamas kitchen. But he only wanted to sleep in his bus!

He listened anxiously when the weather service reported snowfall. He had no winter tires, but had offered a ride to a young man who was not available until the first of November.

And now he's gone, the boy. Phew. I must not worry, he said. And yet, without telling him, I took down his license plate number. As if I had an address for him, as if I needed something tangible to invalidate my horror scenarios. He got in touch after a week, two words were enough for him by short message: Comfortably arrived. In order to save costs, he canceled his cell phone contract in the meantime, also his health insurance, everything. Only at Christmas did he receive another short text message from a Spanish number: "I miss you so much! You can only reach me at the following number: 0034 ... Yes, just don't make active calls! His money should last a few more months.

When I called him, I found it difficult not to let him feel my intense concern. Just "Merry Christmas!", I wished him and asked, "Bub, where are you?"

When he told me his location and assured me he would honestly be glad to see me, my next act was to book! Malaga. So-fort, still on Boxing Day. For the period from the eighth to the nineteenth of January. This suited my job situation as a freelancer - and my longing as a mom. Málaga. It's on the southern Mediterranean coast of Spain. That's all I know about it.

And now? I am childishly or rather motherly looking forward to Raffael. He wanted to make a trip to Gibraltar with me, he suggested to me on my second call, from there over to Morocco for a few days. He wanted to go hiking with me in the mountains, in the Sierra Nevada. We want to visit the Alhambra in Granada. I could sleep with him in the bus and experience the infrastructure of the modern hippies on my own body.

Raffael picks me up on time at the airport in Málaga. "The first stress in two months," he explains to me. "An appointment! Had to get up early," he says, "organize myself so that I don't miss Tuesday and also get to the airport on time at two in the afternoon. That takes nerves! And hours!" I nod with a smile. After all, I come from a work background. I know what he's talking about.

He assigns my suitcase a place on the bus. And now to go east or west?

Now, sitting with him in the bus, this question amuses me. I have not arrived at a fixed point of departure, but directly at a moving object. This is freedom! We decide to drive from Málaga first to the west and then just see.

Two days later it is Thursday and coincidentally my birthday. I sit next to Raffael in my bed in the bus, with which we stand on a free Wohnmo-bil parking lot. When I look out the front window, I see the sun just rising over the Mediterranean. When I look out of the right window: the Rock of Gibraltar. That's exactly how it was depicted in the seventh grade geography book. It was all inaccessible to me back then. Gibraltar, Africa, myth!

And I like that too: the day before yesterday snow in cold Munich, today shorts and T-shirt.

I'm happy to be here. With Raffael it's so easy: clarify needs, make arrangements and go. He handles himself responsibly, I notice with relief. He knows what he wants, says what he thinks, and so do I - at least that's what I imagine - so that we always come to a consensus quickly. And if it doesn't work out quickly: We have the wonderful luxury of time. Worthy circumstances for a fifty-seventh birthday!

For my birthday, we undertake an exciting visit to Gibraltar: British people actually live here, English is spoken, people pay in English pounds, there are typical English shops with names like Bryan Mackintosh Ltd. and the small grocery stores and kiosks are actually called "Grocery". Red telephone booths like in a picture book stand in exposed places, and the children wear school uniforms.

Small side streets off Main Street lead up into the rocks, the Upper Rocks, and up stairs painted with the Union Jack on their large vertical spaces. The lush January vegetation leaves some vistas, so that we can see the large merchant ships with their goods moving in or out on the sea below. On the horizon in the south the Atlas Mountains. Africa! We take the stairs that lead up next to the cable car - and up there we experience another surprise: Five, ten, twenty, hundreds of Africans cavort before our eyes, as if we were not in the middle of Europe!

There they sit, caressing their little ones, pulling fleas out of each other's fur, stroking each other or jostling each other in order to jump down the rocks together and tussle. They jump over the old fortification walls, over the rocks, squat in groups of eight and ten and twelve on the asphalt road, where the few cars that are allowed to drive to the top have to do so very slowly and carefully because of them. A spectacle that we follow spellbound from the roadside, in front of us the sea, behind us the sea and behind it the silhouetted Atlas Mountains. The information board describes them as Barbary macaques. The biggest one reaches up to my hip, the smallest one is as small as a young kitten. We stay until the cool wind moves us to descend.

The rock faces are overgrown with pointed agaves and families of cacti with plate-sized cactus children. Banana bushes and rubber trees as tall as houses line the path. One text message after the other rings in. "Oh yes, there was something," Raffael says with a smile. "Happy birthday again!"

Raffael has given everything to make my birthday beautiful. Not that I expected him to - it was a great concern to him, and he spoke with a wink of the great responsibility he had towards his siblings. Muttl, what would you like to see here, Muttl, what would you like to do there? Muttl, say what you want, I will fulfill it. Would you prefer a place by the sea than on the hill? In no time at all we found a place by the sea - although, as he said, the sea is too noisy for him. And what a place!

A bottle of the best cava Raffael had bought me in a small store, and he afforded us a few slices of a jamón matured for many months, which the owner of the shop with a long, narrow, sharp knife gently and with great concentration cut from the leg of the pig clamped in the jamonero. Accompanied by fresh white bread and a handful of olives, what more do you need?

Raffael laid out his folding chair with his large, shaggy sheepskin so that I would be nice and warm with my view of the sea, while he prepared the table in the car - the three tomatoes from the day before cut into exactly even eighths, the olives in the little bowl, the rest of Manchego split into mouth- watering chunks, and then, salud!, drank the cava from coffee cups. Not to forget, all this by candlelight from the silver candelabra from Mom's old stock - Spanish wilderness my ass!

Raphael showed me photos of his stays in the hippie communes he had met. I showed him photos of the family last year, when he too had been at some of the gatherings.

And in the evening, as I was falling asleep, I enjoyed the view from my bed, with the door wide open, of the starry sky over the sea, where parked ships with their lights formed the night horizon. To our right, the rocky mountains completed the pano-rama.

The next morning at half past eight, when I carefully lift my head from the warm bed to the window, so as not to slip a single corner of the bed because of the nightly chill, I see how the red disk of the sun has just shone completely round and clear directly above the horizon. Wow, I think to myself, what I am nevertheless for a lucky fellow.

The coffee and tea have already worked, soon I will climb into the winter sea to get rid of the liquid again. But the sea must be very cold, I imagine, brrr! And after that I'll slip into a warm bed again, with the pleasant sour-naeffect? Those would be wonderful prospects - but how can I finally actually get myself up for it ...? But soon the urgent need sends me out into the cool morning.

A few days later. I'm still sitting at breakfast in bed in the camper. Covered with a sheep's wool blanket from my mother, which Raffael, the modern na-turfreak, stole from his grandmother and which she saved from the time when there was nothing else except natural materials. My mother had them made from sheep's wool she had shorn herself when I was still a small child and when she was still working as an animal keeper at the Animal University in Munich. I can still remember how the shorn and combed sheep's wool was spread out in all the rooms to dry out and filled the whole house with that special smell. So a good fifty years ago. How contemporary my old mother with her sheep wool blankets is now again, by not jumping on the bandwagon with the plastic blankets of recent decades.

Nice and warm this blanket keeps me again today, because at night and even in the morning it is still cool.

Once in Africa!

After our return from Morocco in the evening simply to lie in the deck chair and let the sun shine on me is a blessing. Our Afri-ka visit was a "must" on the program. But the three days in Tangier had also been very exhausting. Always on guard against the strangeness of the people there. They talk to you, praise their knowledge of the area and the right way like a commodity, sometimes helpful, but mostly just businesslike, looking for sales: Everything very cheap. Very cheap. Très bon marché. Even the beggar, toothless, dirty, wrapped in rags, asks for alms in clean French with a trembling hand.

Cautiously I observe how the women behave. Do they go out on the street alone? Yes, you see them alone, too. Many in an ankle-length caftan. But many predominantly young women are also dressed in modern European fashion, but they also wear headscarves. Only here and there one sees a young woman without head covering. Are they necessarily Christian? I know too little about the country, about Islam. We afford ourselves the adventure (the tourist impudence?) of coming here completely unprepared.

From Gibraltar, we could picture a crossing. Only thirty kilometers across to Africa! Refugees also think of the opposite side: Only thirty kilometers. My concern, primitive, quite unconcerned: to have been once in Africa. And Raffael had heard about cheap shopping possibilities. "Everything only one euro!" Those were our only motives.

The trip turned out to be more protracted than expected - for a quick trip, we probably would have had to take the more expensive Fast Ferry. "Out of the question!" indignant Raffael when I tried to cover the purchase price. For these fifty kilometers to the city of Tangier, we were on the road from thirteen to nineteen o'clock: buying tickets at one of the many (un-serious-looking) ticket agencies at the port in Alge-ciras, looking for the ferry of our provider Acciona, checking in at the huge ticket hall like at the airport, passport control. We had to wait for an hour. Why? we asked ourselves. But all the passengers waited patiently in the chic, marble-lined hall, including us. Finally the door was opened. The man who was doing another passport check just laughed as he matched Raphael's passport photo with his real person. After another ticket check, the long gangway lay before us. It led us into a huge ship with exceptionally generous space, about five hundred sleeping chairs awaited us, and on the second floor there was a restaurant with certainly a hundred tables, on the second and third floor we discovered a large number of sleeping berths. Cars were still entering the basement of the ferry, motor homes, long semi-trailers. It would be some time before we cast off. Raf-fael watched this spectacle very excitedly and checked the situation: whether he would also embark with a motor home one day in order to undertake a tour of Africa with it?

And now we also have to fill out a visa form, after all we are going to a new continent. Fortunately, we had been given a seat near the police counter, so that we could watch and wait until the long queue of passengers had been processed. Now we joined them. The policeman corrected my sloppy writing on the form into characters more clearly legible for Moroccans writing in Arabic, put a stamp in the passport, and I was happy: finally a stamp again. Still many pages in my passport are empty.

Joy when the ship finally departed from Europe towards Africa. Excitement as the At-las Mountains, already clearly visible from the coast, floated ever closer. For an hour and a half, we let ourselves rock comfortably on the crossing.

And finally we would dock, with all the associated time requirements. Then there were problems attaching the gangway to the ship at the dock.

"Always the same thing! As soon as you are in Afri-ca, things are no longer working." This was said by an et-approximately 30-year-old woman wearing a headscarf. She wore a kaf-tan that was open in the back, and crisp jeans and fancy pumps underneath. For safety's sake, we were sent out through the garage. Once again they checked our passports.

At the port, nothing was waiting for us except big cranes, vast concrete deserts and huge white containers, probably for gas, of which there were many, many, maybe a hundred? All passengers got on a bus that was supposed to take us to Tangier, including us. Cost 2.50 euros. Don't pay any more," warned the tough local from the ship, who was bringing home her shopping results from Spain with large bags. I became alert, felt tension, why this warning? She spoke Spanish, English, French and of course Moroccan. She also helped us to get away from the throng of cab drivers after the bus arrived at the bus station and showed us the way to the city. There I was able to ask my way in French.

The Office de Tourisme on Avenue Pasteur is already closed. It is nineteen o'clock and already long dark. Should I ask these people, who seem so different, for a cheap pension? No one really seems trustworthy. There, an Internet café! Here we find orientation on a street map and decide to venture to Ancien Médina and look for the offered hostel for thirty euros a night. Whether we would find this old quarter at all? We'd rather treat ourselves to a cab now. We negotiate two euros for the ride, which would take twenty minutes.

The driver lets us off at Place Petit Socco. He says he can't get any further, the streets are too narrow. Indeed! Narrow alleys lead off from the square, loud Moroccan music blares from the balcony of a small bar, men in caftans and turbans sit at the tables outside and talk excitedly gesticulating. Here, two guesthouses at once! That's what the demolished signs tell us, hanging in front of crumbling houses. "Use your French to ask how much it costs," Raffael asks me. Above the greasy kitchen table in the dark little entryway flaunts a sign that reads "Récepti-on." With a grand gesture, Monsieur explains to me that it costs fifty dirhams for two people per night. That is about five euros for us together. Very carefully, we let him show us the room.

My thirst for adventure is stronger than my disgust. I check the sheets stretched over the extremely old woolen blankets: Does it look washed? Are there any animals crawling around? Well, at least not visibly. Is the rickety, dirty wash basin just hanging on the wall pro forma? No, there is truly running water. The rickety door lock in the formerly classy door, interspersed with colored glass beads, is actually lockable. And where is the toilet?

The man shows me a room whose tiles behind and beneath staring dirt hint at elegant wealth from ancient times. A squat toilet is built into a narrow alcove.

Next to it is an old plastic bucket with water for flushing. No, I decide, I don't want to be put off by the foul smell! After all, a former window in the wall leaves a man-sized hole through which fresh air can flow in. Moreover, the door can be locked here as well.

After this inspection, we nod to the man - and notice the joyful gleam in his eyes. Great business done with these tourists ...

But also we have the feeling to have made it. A place to stay for the already deep dark night! At one of the tables in front of the neighboring restaurant we treat ourselves to lamb chops with beans and potatoes. With it, no, no wine, no beer. It's not on the menu in the local culture. We drink what everyone drinks here: peppermint tea, with lots of fresh green leaves and plenty of sugar.

The café au lait in the morning at the bar across from the guesthouse tastes delicious. It's about the same amount of coffee as an espresso, but served in a water glass. The waiter pours hot milk from a small pot and looks at me expectantly until I understand: I have to say "stop.

The many unfamiliar impressions make the time fly by very quickly. Already we find ourselves again at the ferry exit in Algeciras.

Who are actually the new hippies?

I could tell Raffael was struggling to decide whether to go with me to the area of Nerja, whether to take me to his habitat where his new friends live. "What is a hippie really?", I ask him.

"You see," he says, tightening his posture with the pride of the insider. What I see: young people, as they belong to the circle of acquaintances of my big children and their friends. But there are differences between the few years of their lives. The friends of my oldest seem more dignified. More playful? But maybe this is a criterion: Hippies don't live in nature to perform sports - as is the case with me and my outdoor-loving friends. These afford the super-light Jack Wolfskin pants or a rainproof jacket from The North Face; plus sturdy, truly sturdy shoes from K2. Really warm underwear made of finely combed merino wool. I don't see that here. Certainly also not because these people consciously and selectively live at a financially low level. They leave behind the working society of the countries they come from, in order to prove to themselves here that a free life is also possible without money. Triggered by a certain contempt for our meritocratic customs. All wrong, this exploitation by the much money in capitalism.

At this moment Ole looks in through the window where I am sitting in my warm bed.

Raffael had invited him to breakfast. He also takes Ole as an opportunity to get up now, already around ten o'clock.

Ole has a stick of contained toast under his arm and a sack full of avocados that he picked up somewhere along the way, as he tells us. Ole comes from Aachen and lives in one of the many rock caves that the weather has scraped into the limestone mountains. He points with his hand to a curtain of fabric with a large-patterned, black-and-white print visible in the distance in the rock. "That's my entrance," he says confidently. "Always lit by the sun. So it heats up during the day and isn't cool at night." A sleeping pad on the ground is enough for him to sleep on, he says. Today, a bird flew in to him, he says, and he welcomed it. But he has also been visited by a palm-sized spider, which he thankfully noticed in good time and carried straight back outside.

"I was very happy when I discovered your bus," he tells Raphael. "I thought I wouldn't see you again."

Casual coming, casual going. People know each other. The world here is a village.

What makes a modern hippie? Something is different compared to the hippies my parents tried to protect me from as a child.

As I try to find a sheltered place to go to the toilet, past the five or six aging mobile homes parked here in front of the gorge overlooking the sea, there is a large, wrapped bundle of men lying on the ground. "¡Hola!" he greets politely.

I move on quickly, impressions of homeless people on the Paris metro air shafts imposing themselves on me. On my way back, he is already in a sitting position, his thick sleeping bag including headgear stripped off, now a net of oranges and other edibles spread out on the ground next to him. "¡Hola!" he greets us again.

As we sit in front of the camper at breakfast, a young, handsome man joins us. "How are you?" he asks. "Nice place here, isn't it?" The boys know each other. It's Tommy, who has fled here from rainy England to spend the winter in the warm south. Short haircut, clear profile, neatly dressed in trekking pants and clean T-shirt.

"I saw you go by," he says to me, pointing to the spot where he was lying earlier as a muffled bundle. That's when it clicks for me.

I try to hide my embarrassment with a quick, polite reply. "I didn't recog-nize your face," is all I can think of. "The nights are quite cold, aren't they?"

Indeed, it's eight degrees at most at night, and I, too, slip under two or three blankets in my bed.

The old bus next to us has a German N license plate. Tina comes from Nuremberg, just under two hundred kilometers from my home in Munich. Raffael arranges a bus tour for me. I am thrilled. Tina, a likeable girl in her thirties, has furnished herself very comfortably and practically. "A shower with a water heater was very important to me," she says, pointing proudly to the furnishings, "even though it takes up a lot of space." She initially took a leave of absence from her job, she continues. First for a year, then she would have applied for more time off. Her company couldn't agree to that, so she quit. Her next destination was Portugal. The most expensive thing about this way of life is the gasoline. Raffael confirms that. Otherwise, she adds, the money she has saved is very good. Afterwards, she joins Raffael on the bus to pull over photos of him and flips open her brand-new MacBook Air. "This is the lightest of them all. I bought this for when I'm backpacking."

When Raffael and I return from our mountain tour in the Sierra Nevada that evening, Tina's bus is already gone.

While it's already really dark in Munich at half past four in January, the day stays light here until almost half past six. From the gravel path behind the bus comes a blond dreadlocks up to the butt, dreamy eyes, and asks if he can sit in the chair that is still folded out in front of Raffael's bus from my reclining cure the day before. He sits there for a good hour, gets up, and leaves.

In the evening, Raffael and I sit in the bus, too tired for anything, our legs had been strained today during our five-hour mountain tour to the Pico del Cielo, the "top of heaven". Raffael has warmed up the rice from yesterday, in addition there is tomato sauce with priority garlic, and the avocados of Ole he has cut into it. Just as he fills my plate, Ole is also standing in front of the bus. "Sit down, eat with us," Raffael says. The bus door is open, always with a view of the sea. By now it has become dark.

A tall young man appears in the doorway, blond, thin, hollowed eyes, asks for a cup of tea, says he has an inflammation in his mouth.

"Of course," Raphael says, "brewed up?"

"Yes, would be nice."

Raffael brews tea, right away for the three of us, too. The guy sits down with us on the bus, Ole makes room for him. The young man chews on the chamomile tea bag, visibly seems to be recovering.

In the doorway now stands Ruben, a thirteen-year-old blond boy accompanied by a scowling Frenchman, Estéphane, who has thrown on an expansive inka coat. Ruben leads the conversation, cleanest English, thereby son of Dutch parents, as Raffael explains to me. They met in Beneficio in the commune where Raffael spent his first weeks here in Spain. There, he says, he felt taken care of and looked after "like in a family."

"Raphael was all excited because his mother was coming to visit him," Ruben says in clean English between gushes of words. "He painted the ceiling in the bus, covered the seat cushions, and made everything super clean. You wouldn't even recognize the bus!"

He makes a cool-meaning gesture to Raphael. I don't like that. Raffael himself proudly showed me his beautification results, I don't need a tattletale for that.

"Be good, or your mother will send you to bed!" Ruben dares to say to Raphael in a winking tone when he doesn't clear the dishes right away. I'm not sure if the hippie son is being too cheeky. But when he lets loose another bit of info about Raphael's habits that is definitely not meant for me, I put the brakes on him. I don't want to be privy to Raf-fael's secrets, unless it's from him! I'm just visiting his life.

What makes a modern hippie?

The blond with the tea bag is Danish. Participates little in the conversation, which is in English. With a "Thank you for the tea" he sneaks out again into the darkness, perhaps into his cave.

I try a fantasy: the Dane from just now, freshly showered, haircut and in a business suit. The fantasy succeeds. Behind these dropouts are quite normal, nice, friendly, well-hearted people. They are peaceful, remarkably peaceful. This is also how the Dane says goodbye to us: "Peace is victory," he murmurs and forms the victory sign with his index and middle finger.

One of them is an excellent painter, the other plays the guitar to the delight of everyone. An artist's life? In the commune they live in real families, with many children, says Raphael.

The unkempt appearance is only a consequence of the outdoor life. Regular showers are not possible (and not wanted), combing is not necessary. Clothes have to last for several weeks, why not? Smells are allowed, we are not in closed rooms, but in open nature, which puts everything into perspective.

The man, who today already at nine o'clock in the morning sounded his guitar into the canyon, passes by my window. I am frightened, he is frightened. Which of us looks more frightened, so fresh from sleep? I, too, have not had a chance to wash or even style my hair for five days. I look for my reflection in the sunlit screen and cringe once again.

January 16. Many flies buzz tirelessly around us, butterflies in cheerful colors flutter through the air. Bushes and trees blossom in spring-like white and pink, in between long-stemmed callas hold out their spreading leaves and white flower blossoms to us. Shrubs radiant in lush yellow, orange and red spray their fragrance.

This is the vegetable garden of Europe, I am told casually. Greenhouses with forests of tomato bushes elicit astonished exclamations from me. Avocado groves, which bear their fruit at this time of year, tempt me to pick them and simply take them home, and I try not only one Sharon, kiwi, and bell pepper on our walk.

Who are the new hippies?

Also the garden workers in the surrounding farms with the large greenhouses look like "the" hippies: unwashed, with hair hanging tangled in their faces and very dirty clothes. If I were to use the appearance of a German office worker as a standard here, I would not be able to cope with the world.

It's already Saturday, the flight home is due. In the airport bar I had a coffee, now everything is good. Raffael brought me in our car home still yesterday, late in the evening, from Nerja to Málaga, so that I am quite sure in time at six o'clock at the airport. He and Ole had lit a bonfire to say goodbye, and the two of them had bought dorado at the fish market, potatoes and salad, a real meal, a bar of chocolate for dessert. In the parking lot in Málaga, however, I slept badly: was I excited? Or was it because the parking lot was right on the highway? I also slept badly occasionally in our high-altitude parking lot, where it was exceedingly quiet. Some things drive me around. Whether the contact with hippies harms my son? Whether he distinguishes between "good" and "bad"? Whether he finds "his"? In my presence he didn't smoke, didn't drink, openly reflected with me about the advantages and disadvantages of the free life. Ole was there and said quite openly, "I can do without anything but a joint here and there."

Raffael is into hippie thinking, I realize from our conversations, but in the same breath I also hear out the longing for more money in life. Will they go together? Whether he can stand this balancing act, whether he can take this curve well, find his center? That's probably what made me sleep badly the last few days.

The farewell: loving embrace, loving squeeze. Few words. Thank you, simply thank you, on both sides. Finally, I have tears in my eyes as the plane takes off.

I think back to the farewell dinner. Samuel had collected acorns from holm oaks yesterday, cut them like chestnuts, brought a cast iron pan and put it on a grate on our campfire. Samuel also lives in a cave. When there were enough embers, we too put our dorades, prepared in aluminum foil, into the pan, full of joy for a good farewell dinner.

"What's in there?" asked Samuel in his Swiss accent.

"Our fish," we said cluelessly.

Samuel's voice rose ominously, his eyes glinting wickedly in the glow of the fire. "You could have told me that earlier and saved me the trouble!" No, he was not at all relaxed. Annoyed, he moved away from our spot and started his own fire five meters away, with his own view of the sea.

"Absolutely vegan!" whispered Ole. "But to have it go off like that right away!"

Samuel, around forty years old, was the most wacky guy I'd met here. I hadn't seen feet as dirty as his in open, greasy sandals. The toes covered with pustules. His fingernails long, black, his hands looked as if they had not been in contact with water for weeks. His long black hair was matted, with a small amount of gray hair already growing in his long beard. The gray leggings over his bony legs must have once been black. Now they were faded and full of holes. My housewife look told me: not washed for years. The sleeves of his loose sweater bristled with dirt. Yet he had an expressive face, blue eyes, pronounced cheekbones, and with his tanned complexion he was quite handsome. Did he live in the cave because he shied away from people? Had he not trained his assertiveness towards his fellow humans enough that he had to seclude himself like this? Questions upon questions ran through my head.

Also yesterday, I met Esmeralda from the bus next door, a Spanish woman. She was seldom seen, but was heard doing her relaxation exercises in the evening: She made yowling sounds, from high above to low below.

"She must be pouring out her negative energy," Raffael gave me to understand. "She explained that to me once. Crazy, that woman, but an interesting bus she has!"

After Raffael set up a bus tour for me with her, she kindly let us in and also readily answered. In fluent, neat English, as I have noticed with all the new-age hippies who claim the free life in the warm south there. She had painted the walls pastel colors, the colorful patch-work bedspread over the wide bed was slicked, the laundry and cooking facilities very neatly cleaned. Esmeralda had just prepared her bike for adventures down in Nerja. I felt like an intruder in this private space. And she apparently felt the same way. After our bus tour, we heard her howl again. Probably we had brought bad energy into her bus, the elimination of which had to be tackled before the bike ride.

A lot of things are still going through my head on the plane while I'm looking out the window. Where is the horizon here?

**Sleepless in Padang Bai**

"I'll meet you in Padang Bai."

That's how my son Raffael said goodbye to me when he boarded the bus in Ubud, his backpack on his back, to take the ferry to the Gili Islands in Padang Bai. They are a paradise for young people, he said. So nothing for me, I understood.

Raffael had already spent three months traveling through Indonesia, from island to island, and before his departure from Munich we were looking forward to some time together there. Raffael suspected that he would be homesick. And I would take his stay there as an opportunity to fly to Asia for the first time. I had never been drawn to Asia before, but I was curious enough to go. Bali was special anyway. I had heard so many beautiful things about it.

So now the harbor town of Padang Bai was Raffael's next destination, from there the ferries went to the Gili Islands located in the northeast of Bali. "To their south, Australia is coming soon," Raffael enlightened me.

I stayed back in the small town of Ubud. Admired the many exhibitions of local and Western artists who have settled here. I was charmed by the cute cafes and small stores. Stores with scented oils, sound bowls and yoga mats alternated with inviting one-room practices that offered the gentle Balinese massage.

I spent two more days in this small town, which is famous among Western tourists for the many ways it offers to relax. But I did not want to relax, I wanted to experience. So I also took one of the many buses to Padang Bai. Especially since Raphael had said before he left Ubud that he would only stay three to four days on the Gilis. I thought it was great to be one of the many backpackers from all over the world on the bus.

At the bus station in Padang Bai stood already expectantly some homestay landlords and assaulted the bus passengers in bumpy English with their offers. In fact, the backpackers took them up on their offers, including me. The Balinese woman I followed took me to a country-style house with three guest rooms. "Indraprastha" was written in dainty letters at the entrance. A small temple stood in the middle of the garden, where tropical plants were blooming. I had taken a two-bed room with foresight, and from the terrace I admired the incense rituals several times a day, which were supposed to drive away evil spirits.

And now I had been staying here for two more days. I had texted Raffael the address of the "Indraprastha" on his cell phone. Here we could meet without any problems, I thought. I would look at the village and the beach, chill a bit, swim a bit. And then we would see.

But it came differently. Raffael sent an e-mail. Yes, he had remembered the name of the homestay. But somehow he had made a mistake at the ATM.

They swiped my credit card! he wrote. And the bank employee inexplicably needs at least four days to get it out again. He can't reload my cell phone card. I'll just come sometime. Wait for me at the homestay.

Padang Bai is a pretty little fishing village in the east of the island of Bali. Picturesque barges, the Ju-kungs, with their wide, tentacle-like outriggers lurch in the water, and the fishermen sit on bamboo jetties on the beach during the day and are involved in pleasant conversations or watch the tourists waiting for the ferries that often land.

Several times I had walked up and down the small beach, there was not much to explore in the village. But I always gave a wide berth to the cages that were set up on the ground - each with a beautiful view of the sea. They should be fine, the magnificent roosters, which, as I could read in my guide, were provided with the best food and kept by the men in better conditions than their females in the house. They were pampered by their owners before competing in the infamous traditional cockfights. These crowing cages in their multitude alienated and frightened me, especially since in Germany it was preached to be careful because of the bird flu. At the thought a horror went through me.

Even as I walked through the streets more remote from the harbor, I felt a fierce inner defense against the many roosters and chickens that could fling their infected feathers at me with every flap of their wings.

Every few yards, I also passed a stinky garbage dump, the components of which we would euphemistically call "organic waste" in our clean country. I didn't dwell on whether the acrid smell came from the age of the dump or possibly from the quantity of discarded durians, the stinky fruit available at every little market stall. Be-accelerated step, I walked on rapidly in each case until, a corner away, the next fug seemed to cling to my body. Due to the tropical heat I was continuously drenched in sweat.

On the very first day in Padang Bai, after a beautiful morning swim in the warm sea, I had climbed back into the sea that same afternoon full of joy and had not noticed the meanwhile lower water level at low tide. Too fast I had thrown myself, just like in the morning, into the sea - and pulled in a coral splinter under my big toenail. And it hurt more and more. And the nail became increasingly black. The very next day it looked like an inflammation. According to Google, it needed medical attention. Phew. In the place there was only a small infirmary, I learned. Which healing methods would they recommend to me? Would my foot be sprayed with spider venom or wrapped with leaves from the jungle? But no, everything was thoroughly disinfected, and I understood just so much from the broken English: Change daily, for five days, then come again. Of course, do not swim and do not expose to contamination, not even sand on the beach.

At this mini-place, which I had already passed through several times, I was now to spend more days.

I sat on the terrace and could no longer enjoy reading. Had I come to Bali just to read? I was angry, very angry.

And then I had to deal with another issue.

My homestay was laid out in such a way that one entered the rooms, which were next to each other on the first floor, via a large terrace, which was openly accessible to all, in front of the rooms. Their entrance area was adorned with a small table and two chairs. Breakfast was served here and it was a good place to be if it was too hot in the room or too cold because of the air conditioning.

There I sat in that evening, the legs times rather put up on the second chair, because in the evening before over the white tiled terrace floor a matchbox-size, black cockroach with infinitely long feelers had scurried unmistakably. I didn't want to have one of those between my feet.

It was meanwhile nine o'clock in the evening, since six o'clock it was dark. An English-speaking couple had just moved into the room next to me. The two young people carried their backpacks across the terrace into the room. Soon I heard loud voices. Going in, going out. Sometimes him, sometimes her. Again loud debating. Then one of the backpacks fell out of the door. Shortly after, the hand luggage and the second backpack. Followed by the woman, then the man. There was something excited in their posture.

"Do you know," they asked me in English, "where we can find the owners here? There is no-one at the reception desk".

"Yes, around the corner there lives the family, you can knock there," I returned. "But is there anything troubling that I should know too?"

Embarrassed, they looked at me.

"Bugs! There are bugs!" she blurted out.

"Bugs? What is that?" I didn't know.

"These little black insects, biting during the night, you know?" She indicated a small length with her thumb and forefinger.

She couldn't be serious! I shuddered.

"Are you sure?", I asked.

Very definitely she nodded and then shook herself with a disgusted look on her face, "Absolutely sure! I have met them in another hotel, it was terrible. I don't want them one more time in my life! There are bugs in the room."

The two picked up their backpacks and went to find the owner's family. The search engine told me what I had feared: bedbugs. There were bedbugs here.

Now I also shook myself.

I quickly calculated what I would have to pack and how quickly I would get my backpack out of the room and then ... join the couple. Pay and go.

I was already on my feet, but then my coral toe hurt. I had just wanted to bandage it freshly and already had ointment and bandages ready.

Raphael!, it shot through my head. How would he find me? He could come tomorrow and he couldn't be reached by cell phone. And whether he would be able to read an e-mail was questionable, because he had planned to spend the night outdoors on the beach. Phew! But I could not stay here at this address. I was dreading.

On the other hand, I had already spent two nights here and had not noticed anything.

I examined my skin as far as I could see. What did I know about bedbugs? Only that they stung when you slept, which then itched terribly. And that they were black, crawled into mattresses and stuck to the walls at night. That they made a cracking sound when you crushed them or squashed them with your fingers. Oh no, how the thought disgusted me!

My skin showed no bite marks at all. Only two mosquito bites, which I already knew.

Could it be that bugs were only in the other room and not in mine? Or was I not sensitive to them? Or did they not like me, the bugs?

In the meantime, the couple had passed and left, greeting me lightly, and disappeared into the night.

Already I felt a tingling sensation on my body. I hum-pled to my room. Carefully I stopped at the door. I searched it carefully for even the most hidden places. I went to the bed and slowly, very carefully, pulled back the covers and examined the whole thing very carefully. Under the mattress, however, I did not dare to look. Who knew what was waiting for me there ...

Could I dare to sleep here? But what choice did I have? No, I had not had any bad experiences. I had been able to sleep well here the last few nights, why should I sleep here this night of all nights?

My distress decreased with every minute. Once again I took the book from the chair to be able to sit down at the terrace table. No, reading was no longer possible. I stood up again. Dragged my aching foot back and forth on the terrace and watched the terrace floor. Then I sat down again, unwound the old bandage and put on a fresh one. Yes, the toe was still inflamed. Put it up, the nurse had said.

Again I wondered if I could get into this bed. In the meantime I had become tired. Too tired. And nothing was crawling! Maybe the young woman next door had been mistaken after all.

Very attentively I pushed myself centimeter by centimeter onto the bed. Under strong observation of my environment slowly pulled the blanket on me. Nothing. No beast. I lay in bed and felt it tingle. But that was only inside. There! Wasn't there something to feel, wasn't there something pinching on my stomach? I jerked the blanket away and looked at him. But there was nothing. Only the old sting. Would I be able to stand it? Would I be able to sleep at all? Whether I could escape the tingling or whether this would go on forever? These thoughts occupied me for at least two hours. Whether I could ... ? But now it was too late to look for a new place to stay, far after midnight.

In the end, tiredness helped me to sleep. But it did not last long. Because again and again - there! - wasn't there a pinch? There was something crawling! Oh, how it tickled. Light on, look, no, but there was nothing. Rolling back and forth. Fall asleep, wake up, tingle, light on, nothing, doze off again ...

I woke up early to a noise and an unpleasant smell from the next room: Yes, someone was spraying insecticide. Long, persistent, abundant. I closed the window. Should they be spraying over there. I hadn't noticed anything and ultimately slept for a few moments.

Raphael did not report even the following day. I stayed. Two more nights. And became more and more quiet.

When Raffael finally came, he too slept like a bear.

I only told him about my bedbug mania when we were back in Germany. That's when he laughed out loud and showed me his faded bite lines on his body. "You're lucky the critter in my backpack was already dead when I emptied it in your apartment."

I let out just a little scream, just a very little one.

**In Törnen it is autumn**

On the way to our ancestors

How often Motter and Voter told in their stories about the villages through which we were now passing: Gergeschdorf, Rotkirch, Törnen. However, Motter - I have adopted my parents' form of address from their native dialect - now had to translate the Romanian village names for us as we approached our destination after two days of travel. Today they are Ungurei, Ro?ia de Secas, Pauca. Yes, we wanted to go to Tör-nen, Pauca, Jude?ul Sibiu - that had been part of the address of my two cousins of the same age here in Romania, with whom I had cultivated a young-girl pen-pal friendship forty years ago. They lived in the extensive district of the beautiful old Sibiu/Hermannstadt, the metropolis of Transylvania and European Capital of Culture 2007.

Already during the drive through Ungurei/Gergeschdorf, my son Raffael and I, we Munich-born descendants of this ancient tribe, came into close contact with the decay of the land "of abundance and strength" described in the "Transylvanian Hymn". Finally, the road led us past the old cemetery. Motter had pointed out to us.

"PLACE OF REST. Evangelischer Friedhof Gergesch-dorf" was written in large fracture letters on a white, flaking enamel sign above the wrought-iron entrance gate. Hanging from it was a rusted lock and a washed-out note in a plastic sleeve that told us, "The keys are at Rop-pelt, Hauptstraße 40."

Motter casually mentioned, "Up there, to the left of the chapel, is the grave of my Gergesch-dorf grandfather. And my great-grandfather also lies here. He had been a pastor in Törnen. On his gravestone there was even a photo of him and his wife. Whether the gravestone still stands? Many have fallen over, I see."

Raffael, my 29-year-old youngest, hadn't talked much beyond the organizational stuff necessary for the trip. The long car ride of one thousand four hundred kilometers had been tiring for all of us.

But suddenly he livened up and showed the excitement of the explorer. "The key, we need the key!" he said excitedly, and he infected me with it too.

Mr. Roppelt was at home and was pleased with our interest. He was about forty and had a small child in his arms. "My wife is Romanian," he explained, "and that's why I stayed here in Gerge-schdorf and in Romania." His German had the hard sound that is so typical of the seven-Burgundian-Saxon German. He himself walked with us through the cemetery.

Here rest Martin Lutsch and his wife Maria. Here rest Matthias Roppelt and his sons Michael and Johann. Here rest Michael Lutsch and his wife Katharina. Their children are mourning. Here rest Michael Ganesch and his wife Maria.

"What's going on here?" Shaking his head, Raphael walked from one grave to the other. "Why is everything here in German?"

After all, we had driven five hours from the Hungarian-Romanian border crossing over Romanian roads, through Romanian long villages, the people were Romanians, and when we stopped along the way, the people all around us spoke Romanian. What else? And now, in the middle of the country, a German-speaking cemetery?

The Transylvanian Saxons demarcated themselves neatly. They fiercely defended their German-language schools and churches. Only in this way were they able to survive all assimilation attempts by the imperial and royal monarchy and the Romanian state. Monarchy and the Romanian dictator Ceau?escu, they were able to maintain their autonomy as a minority in the country. The current Romanian cemetery was located in another part of the village.

His grandmother's many stories, in which she had repeatedly emphasized that, although born in Romania, she was not Romanian but German, had probably not been vivid enough for Raphael's imagination.

Raphael's three siblings would travel independently of us to be able to relive Grandma's stories at the original location. With his help, I had been able to take my 90-year-old mother along with her wheelchair in my camper. Despite her age-related infirmities, which made the trip difficult for her, it had not taken much persuasion for her to make the trip.

To visit the old homeland once again and to show her grandchildren all the things that they were only now interested in because of their age, but which they could not imagine from grandma's stories alone - that was motivation enough for her to take on the long trip. I was also very happy about this. And Raffael took his role as a strong walking aid for grandma in an exemplary manner and had completely entrusted himself to the guidance of Muttl and grandma.

"We are looking for the grave of Michael Imbrich."

Mr. Roppelt laughed. "The name exists at least five times here. Don't you know any more about it?"

Motter was at least able to describe the location of her grandparents' grave to us. Sure enough, there it was.

"If you pour water over the gravestone, you can decipher the writing a little better again," Mr. Roppelt explained to us.

"Muttl, you took drinking water with you in your backpack!" Raffael was very excited. I was too, and so I immediately poured our water over the stone. Yes, now it was clear to read. In addition, we traced the deepened writing with our fingers:

Here rest

Michael Imbrich

Born 1872 died 1921

And his sons Samuel and Johann ...

"I get goose bumps," Raphael said.

A strangely holy feeling also crept over me as we took our positions at "our" gravestone and Mr. Roppelt took a photo with us. Yes, we had traveled here for two days with my old mother, and it had been exhausting, but here in foreign soil lay a part of ourselves.

We thanked Mr. Roppelt very much for the tour. Then we were drawn further to Törnen. What would await us there?

Arrived in Motter's home

In Törnen/Pauca, the asphalt was torn up. The old Törnen, as I had known it on my last visit as a teenager, was now to get a sewer system.

get a sewer system. So we had arrived just in time to experience my mother's stories authentically and up close before civilization took hold here in the village as well.

"Slow down here," she asked me as we passed the first houses of Törnen.

"The Makkali lived here, the Dalnaatsch next to them, then the Geggesch, the Luponz, the Hanzen ..." Motter still knew them all, the clan names in Törnen, with which the families could be better identified than with the often identical official family names. Their houses were still standing, but the shutters were closed and locked, the plaster was peeling, wild grasses were growing in front of the large driveway gates that had once housed the horse-drawn wagons. In the typical long village of the region, house front after house front lined up along the street, each with two houses sharing one wall. The gardens behind them often stretched for miles up the hill. Then we entered the address "Hinter den Gärten", the only street in the village that branched off to the right from the main road.

My cousin Sinni had made her parents' house available to us for our family reunion. Here we were allowed to live for our two weeks. Sinni had left home with her family immediately after the opening of the western borders in 1990, as had most other Transylvanian Saxons.

Two houses ahead in the row stood Motter's parents' house, which belonged to her brother Georg. He was visiting his house with his wife Maria as well as his daughter Maria. He lived here with his family until the fall of the Berlin Wall. Then they too left for the West as quickly as possible. To the Black Forest, where his wife's sister had moved after the Second World War. With Uncle Georg's presence we could be sure to get some explanation about the state of affairs in Törnen these days - and in Transylvania, whose unique nine hundred year old past will soon be simply history.

It was a nice coincidence that Maria Henning and her husband Martin were here as neighbors. Both lived in Germany, they were also visiting their own house. Maria Henning had bought it three years ago from her father, who also lived in Germany. Martin and Maria spent their annual vacation renovating their parents' house and keeping it fit for habitation. Sixteen hundred kilometers from their current home in Bavaria.

Maria led us to one of the few Transylvanian Saxons who still lived permanently in the village. This one looked after the house of my cou-sine Sinni during the year. Maria walked with us to the back entrance, which was on our street, and called inside in her old Transylvanian Saxon dialect:

"Mai-Maun?", meaning: "Aunt Maria?"

"De Mai-Maun es net hae, dinken ech, owwer ech well se amoll uroffe," answered a woman from the neighboring garden and put her cell phone to her ear. The called one was however nevertheless at home and came out, likewise the cell phone in the hand.

"What do you want, Enno? Haj jo, de Geest sänn hae!" she called out, "Äch wäll norr de Schlässel hiulen."

When I wanted to reverse the camping bus over the narrow road bordered by a moat into the yard driveway, the two Hen-nings were kind enough to direct me from the right. By then the Romanian neighbor on the left had also stepped out of his house and was directing me from his side. The Mai-Maun, who had given me the key, shouted in a strong voice from behind, and Enno, her neighbor, indicated to me with sweeping arm movements sometimes to the left and sometimes to the right how I should perhaps steer. Another Romanian had stopped his horse-drawn vehicle, was leisurely lighting a cigarette and commenting on what was happening with his head movements and loud "da, da" and with "nu, nu".

Finally, I was in. But to push further back, to drive more up the rising grass strip in the yard, was not possible - over the damp clay soil my front tires were now slipping away.

"Oh, I'm sorry, I was doing laundry today and the water is running down the hill onto the road. Now everything is wet," apologized Ma-ria, the 35-year-old daughter of my uncle Matthias in the house next but one, who in the meantime had also witnessed our arrival.

So the yard gate remained open for that night.

"Nothing will happen!", Martin and Maria Henning assured me.

Only in later conversations did Maria, my cousin, tell us that only recently at three o'clock in the morning two figures had rattled at her yard door and that the family had only driven them away by loudly showing their presence. Since the migration of the Transylvanian Saxons to Germany, many of the farms have been completely abandoned or are visited at most four weeks a year as a vacation resort. There could still be something to get ...

But in the following days nobody did laundry, the road stayed dry, and I could drive up the meadow far enough on dry tires and close the gate at night.

An unfamiliar life

"You can use my pump at the well," Martin offered my son Raphael. "You just have to keep waiting, when the water gets murky, for two hours for it to clear before you keep pumping."

A full two-hundred-liter barrel would be enough for us for the next few days, he said.

"You don't even have to think about showering here like you do back home in Germany!" explained Mar-tin with a laugh. "We didn't use to shower either! Washing a little more than your face once a week - we didn't even think of doing anything else!"

My camper didn't offer us a shower either; it was equipped with only a mi-ni water basin in favor of more space.

So, on a small concrete platform in the yard, we set down a tin wash bowl we had found in the house. After Motter had washed his hands in it, Raphael stood there perplexed.

"And me?" he asked.

"Well, you too!", Motter answered him.

Hesitantly and with a reluctant expression on his face, he washed his hands in the same water. Motter stood by and laughed. And had a story to tell for the next few days about the spoiled young people.

"Our well was twenty meters deep!" She proudly told of the water supply at her parents' house two houses down. "This one at Sinni's is not so deep. I want to go over to my brother's house right now. Nowhere else have I drunk such good water!"

Then she asked for her walking stick. With unimagined energy and speed, she was already on her way over to her brother. Did I mention that Motter's name is also Maria?

The long yard, which consisted in equal parts of a garden and the meadow, was closed off by a long, meter-wide concrete strip directly in front of the house. It prevented that one stepped directly from the earthy meadow into the room.

Now I went into the good parlor and felt instantly transported back forty years. This, I remembered, was where the family used to gather for dinner. The smell of dry earth and smoked bacon hung in the air just as it did then. It had been delicious, the well-hung bacon, so tender and aromatic, as I have never eaten it since. In front of my inner eye I saw my aunt holding the huge loaf of bread in front of her chest with her left hand and guiding the big knife through it with her strong right hand to cut off thick edges for the family and us visitors. The bacon was cut into fin-ger-cup-sized cubes. We fed them into our mouths with our hands, and from the paprika - which at that time was only slowly appearing in German supermarkets - we cut strips and dipped them in salt. What a delightful feast that was for a seventeen-year-old schoolgirl from Munich!

Above the table with the six chairs still hung the same hand-embroidered motto, neatly embroidered on white linen with red thread and rich ornaments, as also shown in an old photo in my youth photo album:

I have found the most beautiful hours in the world only in my home.

An old cupboard stands there, with dishes and pots. Next to it an unused stove, connected to the fireplace with a stovepipe, but neatly covered with a hand-embroidered tablecloth, because in winter nobody is here.

And a chest bench, that is a wooden bench that when extended contains a sunken bed. In the corner between the entrance and a door to a second room, which has only one window overlooking the courtyard, there is a wooden rack with a recess into which the large family washing bowl fits. In die-sem room we found a bed provided for Motter, and a straw sack on the floor, which Raphael was pleased to find. "I've never slept on a straw sack before!" he enthused. "Very ecolo-gical it is!"

Back then, forty years ago, the narrow chest bed from over the road stood in this spot, serving as a sleeping place for three of the family's six children. It had been cleared for me, and the three boys had slept in the hayloft as a matter of course.

Five steps further up the hill, always along the garden and meadow strip, we came into the second entrance, which led into the third and last small room. In it rested an old kitchen cabinet, next to it a table with a plastic top on which stood two electric hotplates. Six simple, worn wooden chairs framed a wooden dining table whose lower struts were worn away by the feet of the six children who had grown up in this house. Behind it was another chest bench that had been pulled out. In it lay another straw sack, on which, with romantic glee, my daughter Lisa would then sleep with her husband and the fourth generation, Motter's ten-year-old great-grandson Vinzent. The three of them had combined the Transylvania trip with a trip to the Balkans. My two oldest sons, Dominik and Markus, thirty-seven and thirty-five, had also taken the plane to Sibiu in the meantime and joined us by inexpensive cab. They enjoyed sleeping on hay in the barn.

It was not easy for us to get organized here. In these small rooms we had to store all our drinks and food, meat, vegetables, fruit, wine, beer, water - everything in this quantity and in a confusing way. And where to put the garbage? The merciless September heat of this southern region was already waiting directly in front of the open door.

Motter took command as a matter of course.

"You fetch water from the well! In the big tin bowl!" she ordered Raphael.

"And the used water - I'll have to carry it all the way to the drain by the well?" he grumbled.

Without understanding, she shook her head. "But you dump that into the garden!"

When I set up a compost bucket outside the door, again shaking my head. "You throw that in the garden, too. Otherwise the mosquitoes will get in here."

Peach pits, apple bunches, bell pepper trunks, the vines of the grapes picked in the garden - well, we untrained city dwellers learned to simply throw all this over the lawn into the garden and to bring larger remains collected in the evening to the dried-up compost heap. This was located behind the barn, which bisected the width of the property. There behind, where we had also found the outhouse.

"All the farmers here have built the barn in the way, which slows down the passing wind," Motter explained to us expertly. And she kept reminding us: "Why don't you close the door to the barn? Otherwise the animals will come in. Grazing sheep and horses, foxes, stray dogs, in former times also the wolf. I remember my father with a stick in his hand ..."

Under the spell of the church bells

My cousin Maria accompanied us up the hill to the cemetery and showed us the graves of our common Törner great-grandparents. Besides water, this time I had brought a pencil as well as paper to trace the expected faded writings and copy them.

On Sunday, Markus, my second-born, wanted to see if a mass would be held. No, nothing. Examining, he looked at the bell tower of the old church. I knew what he was thinking. But there was no one at home in the rectory to give us the key.

"Come on Muttl, we can do it. I'll make you a robber's ladder."

I felt hot. Wasn't that trespassing? Or was it desecration of the church? Unholy?

But then his interest in our common history was more important to me than law and order, and I hoped the priest would see it that way, too. Probably he had already been living in Germany for a long time? But we would never again come to Törnen in this composition. Not with and not without Motter. So: In no time at all he pushed me up and pulled himself up on a protruding strut.

There it hung, a large bronze bell, with the letters cast in it:

Dedicated by your countrymen

from America in 1926.

Even then, Transylvania survived a wave of emigration. How would it continue today?

Two days earlier I had been with Dominik, Markus and Lisa in Bußd, Mühlbach County, where my father was born. He had been drafted into the German Wehrmacht as a soldier and, after being an American prisoner of war, had been released to West Germany in 1946. In Bußd we had searched for my grandmother's house with Motter's help. But all we found was a field. After a few minutes of thoughtful silence, I went to the car and got a bag. I asked Dominik to hold it for me and shoveled soil into it with my hands. At home in Munich, I would put it in a decorative jar on the shelf - and maybe write "Heimaterde" on it?

At the bend, behind which one came to Voter's house, stood the old fortified church of Bußd. What strength it still radiated! Despite the crumbling walls. Here, too, a note with the address of the key-holder, here, too, no one at home.

"I want to go in there!", Markus had already said at this church.

He looked for a somewhat broken-in place on the wall surrounding the churchyard. And poof, he was in the churchyard. So were Dominik and his sister Lisa. "Come on Muttl, you can do it!" So did I. Yes, I wanted to support the curiosity of my children, by all means. We climbed a dilapidated wooden staircase and supported each other until we reached the top. There we found a great surprise that posed exciting riddles for us. "Dedicated by Georg Platzner 1926" could be read in sublime letters on the bell. We had already seen the gravestone of Georg Platzner at the cemetery in Bußd. Platzner, that had been the maiden name of Voter's mother. And now? No one there whom we could ask. Voter had already died. For a long time, the four of us sat in silence around the rotten entablature and the bell before we carefully climbed down and out again to drive back to Törnen with Motter, who was waiting in the camping bus.

Motter had had a lamb slaughtered by a shepherd in the village for the barbecues at our farm in Törnen. She enjoyed giving plenty of her memories by the fire and in return, here in her homeland, having very interested listeners. In Munich, this had all been so far away for her grandchildren.

On our exploratory tour through Tör-nen/Pauca, however, Motter - Raffael was pushing the wheelchair - also showed us the large square in the town that had ultimately changed her life and thus also mine - yes, that of all of us.

Today, a new town hall stands on this spot.

On January 13, 1945, seventy years ago, she and her older sister were chased out of their house by the Romanian police and gathered together with ninety-eight other German inhabitants of the village at this square. From here they were driven to the train station in Hermannstadt, thirty kilometers away. I knew the rest from her earlier stories. They had been crammed into cattle wagons and deported to a labor camp in what was then the Soviet Union. But in this very place, it also sounded different to me than at Motter's living room table in Munich. Here, with the view to the old fortified church on top of the hill, where the Transylvanian Saxons had defended themselves and their land against incursions of Turks and Tatars hundreds of years before. Here, Motter reported, the Romanian policemen would have stood in line and used their beatings to make sure no one escaped. Heartbreaking, she said, were the weeping and sobbing, at seven in the morning, when the church bells rang down from the hill to the stern shouts of the gendarmes.

Through this and other turmoil of war, Motter came to Munich - and had to stay, involuntarily, a refugee, because of the political circumstances of the time. Among the refugees she met my father, who came from Bußd. So I was born in Munich and not in Törnen. So my name is not Maria and I did not learn to lead oxcarts, but I was allowed to go to grammar school and study. Just like my children.

Today Motter has a Romanian nurse in Munich, her name is Loredana. She doesn't speak German. She doesn't have to, because Motter's Rumanian, which she had practiced only as a foreign language until her deportation at the age of nine-ten, is still surprisingly good. Loredana is very nice. "Even though she's Romanian," Motter says. She has forgiven the Rumanians. And is most pleased that Loredana cooks "like she does at home."

**As a mom in Turkey**

A trip to Turkey, variant two

I had earned quite well, my sister knew that. So I had no excuse: I had to go along. "My three always want to do nothing but sports," she said. "Then I sit around alone. Why don't you come with me sometime, then we can finally have a good chat again!"

A few weeks later, I wrote to my children:

"Dear Dominik, dear Lisa, dear Markus, dear Raf-fael (this time not in the order of your ages, but in alphabetical order for a change),

a few days ago we landed in Antalya. I would never have booked such an all-inclusive vacation without Nicole, you know that. Since I am no longer with your dad, we have made many camping vacations together, and I love the free life of camping more than anything. But now I am reporting from "hotel vacation extreme". Because Nicole talked me into it.

And, surprise: I'm thrilled.

If I were a nature purist, I would of course have to reject all this: The whole hotel complex as such, into which we Central Europeans are forced with our own values, in the middle of foreign life, in a foreign culture, the main thing is a vacation on the beach. Wouldn't work at all, wouldn't fit at all, I would be a purist.

But as soon as I arrived here, I forgot all that in one fell swoop. "Welcome to Club Sonnenparadies" is written in big letters above the entrance. And it's not called a club for nothing.

We live here in a huge area, some quad-rat kilometers of protected paradise with sea in front and mountains behind. Several hundred houses are spread over the area, they are two to three stories high at the most and each accommodate a number of spacious hotel rooms. To make it easy to find one's own hotel unit, the buildings are grouped like small islands, and these have order names such as Sun, Moon and Planetary Nights. But these do not seem to be enough, because I have also seen units named Sea, Water, Beach, Sand and the like. The green areas between the buildings have street names like Pinienwald or Zu den Palmen or Auf der Wiese. Yes, all in German.

A practical advantage of this club vacation is that everything is included, besides food and drink also sports courses without end. These are always led by pro-fit trainers. A muscular and well-trained referee puts together a beach volleyball team several times a day at set times. Friendly and determined, she teaches us the current rules of the game. Yoga, stretching, abdominals, XCO Shape, fascia training, all the modern trends, everything is already there. And for spinning, there are an estimated hundred indoor bikes in the large sports hall.

Swimming is always possible anyway, the sea has a pleasant temperature. Sauna in the evening. Everything is chic, new, modern, with a lot of marble, a lot of wood, a lot of towel racks, a lot of cozy bathrobes, a lot of noble resting area, nothing at all moldy, as we have experienced and loved it on our campsites - it is always clean here.

I will come home after this week topfit.

But also round as a ball.

Because the food is insane. This selection of appetizing buffets, yes, you read that right, with countless, five to ten meter long feast tables: salad buffet, fish buffet, light food buffet, meat-of-lamb buffet, meat-of-beef buffet, meat-of-chicken buffet, and for us tourists there is also a meat-of-pork buffet in this isolation. Everything is prepared in front of our eyes, also fish roasted in front of our eyes, vegetables in fifty wonderful variations, and of course there is also a dessert buffet, consisting of all kinds of artfully prepared delicacies from the most diverse regions, in addition always fresh, appetizingly cut and cleverly piled up fruits. All kinds of drinks, tea, coffee, beer and table wine included, which means you never have to think: Do I want to afford another one? One simply fetches. Dangerous. The Sonnenparadies Club is a German club. That means for all stressed German managers and Co. that one does not have to change biss-chen and with a foreign language an-strengen. Also the staff speaks German, the guests anyway. They are a relaxed mixture of all kinds of professions and age groups. Some states are still on vacation, so families with children are also here. And us. The club concept dictates that people also mingle at the dining tables. People sit down with others at the table for eight and look for common conversation - so far, that's always been stimulating for me. There is deliberately no WLAN in the restaurant area.

But of course I also enjoy spending a lot of time with my sister again after a long time and catching up with her, in addition to all the many sports activities that all five of us like to take part in. Your uncle Hans-Dieter is also there, but also your cousins Tamara and Susanne like to take such a club vacation with their parents.

In short: Nicole doesn't have the ratchet fun with me that she had hoped for. I, too, succumbed to the temptations of the numerous and varied sports and entertainment activities on offer. Since the first day I have a giant muscle soreness, which I will cover up until the end with ever new sporting activities. And I have a huge fat belly, which grows and grows and will not be able to be covered up.

Conclusion: I have no idea what country I'm in, nor what kind of problems are moving this country all around, but it's awesome here. In a few days we will get on the plane again. And where were we?

Sincerely

Your Muttl

A trip to Turkey, variant one

After my divorce it took quite a long time until I was able to land enough orders as a freelancer. So, money-wise, my bank account had been low for a while. I was happy when I won a trip in a lottery (yes, I had tried everything!): a week in Turkey in April, when the hotels were still empty. But I read on the net that bathing temperatures were already to be expected. Peter, with whom I had dared a second marriage for six years, was a teacher and therefore dependent on the vacations. So I took the step alone. Only pocket money I had to bring, I had limited myself to a hundred euros for that week. I wrote to my children:

Dear Raffael, dear Lisa, dear Markus, dear Domi-nik (for a change, I'll start from the back in terms of age),

I immediately accepted the flight date, which was very tight in terms of time, and left, you know that - admittedly, I still had a lot to organize at work and hardly any time to prepare. I have never in my life participated in an organized trip and had great reservations. So far we had always gone on vacation on our own. I had never been to Turkey before. What did I really know about Turkey? Pathetically little. And then I was allowed to experience so many interesting things!

I leave out the first day, which was marked by arrival and first orientation, and start immediately with the second:

In the travel program, as it was arranged and announced, was a bus trip to the interior of Anatolia, to Pamukkale. We started from Antalya, where we spent the first night in a hotel. Antalya has more inhabitants than Munich! I shared my double room with a woman from Germering, apparently she didn't want to afford the single room supplement either. But she is nice.

The guide, Dr. Yildiz (yes, that's his real name! It means "star." In Germany he would probably be called Müller or Schmidt), is a Germanist, so he speaks perfect German and gives the tour group a lot of interesting info about Turkey, the social structure, the school system, about economy and history. Unfortunately I could not remember everything.

We drove over a pass road through the Taurus mountains. The sandstone must be quite soft, because it is very fissured. Forestation prevents landslides and falling rocks. My heart sank at the sight of so much beautiful, wild nature! We drove past Termessos, which is an ancient customs town. It is known that Alexander the Great would have liked to take it, but he did not manage to do so, even with his troops, because the "eagle's nest" is built in the middle of wild cliffs and lies at an altitude of a thousand meters.

At the beginning of May the storks arrive from Africa, then the nomads move from the low hills high into the cool mountains, here they stay until the end of August. Goats are their capital. Seventy to eighty per family. Richer herders weave their tents from goat hair - it cools in summer and warms in winter. The less wealthy tie dark brown burlap to plastic tarpaulins with strings.

Then again, large apple orchards spread across the plateau. The latticed villas for the rich from the city, who spend the summer here in the cool highlands, are followed by small settlements with houses of the poorer, no, of the poor, four walls, a roof, done.

Unpronounceable place-name signs accompanied us. We traveled comfortably with air conditioning in a Mer-cedes bus that was only half full, and everyone got a window seat.

Breaks were also planned. We were spared the adventure "Turkish village toilet", because the bus driver stopped at a gas station for tourists, which offered us toilet bowl, sink, toilet paper and cleanliness.

We drove through Korkuteli. Horses pulled cement bags, watermelons, eggplants and other goods through the small town. The population up here corresponded to the image that Turkish guest workers gave me in my childhood: dark complexion, small stature, slightly curly black hair, a pronounced nose, stooped posture, the facial expression rather pinched than cheerful.

As we drove on, we were accompanied for miles by sparsely wooded, rolling hills to the left and right, giving the impression of sand dunes. At the very top of the mountains, snowfields still shine.

Few, very simple houses, small square boxes with roofing, duck into the landscape.

Then again mountainous stone desert. At a stone quarry you can see the hard structure of the rocks, which the weathering has dissolved into an endless sea of stones. Only because they moved, I could recognize the many sheep between the stones. If I were a sheep, I would be worried about unleashing an avalanche of stones every time I stepped on them!

A small village with a mountain cemetery appeared on the side of the road. Only on very new gravestones the names of the deceased are still readable, because graves are not maintained in Islam. One cares for the living, father and mother are highly valued. The few houses in the village all showed the same picture: For spring cleaning, the carpets were wet cleaned and now hung outside to dry. Colorful and cute they decorated the poles, which are part of the basic equipment of the houses, each house has one. In most of the houses it was difficult for me to imagine carpets inside because of the exterior condition. Where else would they get materials? A small store is integrated into one of these tiny houses and carries only the most necessary goods. It would be a day's journey to the nearest hardware store in town. After an hour's drive, endless mountain ranges still rose behind vast valleys, but at least I spotted isolated houses, somewhere up in the rocks or pushed far back, off and far from the road.

We passed some nomadic families who were using a plain near the road for themselves. Under plastic sheeting to protect them from the weather, they sat on wooden stakes. All around them hopped hundreds of goats, black, brown, white.

After a needful break, we drove another three quarters of an hour to Pamukkale and left the bus right at a restaurant where tables were reserved for the tour group.

Since my winnings included only bed and breakfast and I had not booked half board, I looked for a garden spot to eat the sausage I had bought in Antalya the day before and my Pide bread, and found a beautiful, tranquil rock garden with paths, watercourses, splashing fountains and rare birds, laid out like an intricate maze. Even in the shade of the light green planting - the crowns of the trees were cut off - it was wonderfully warm, the water and the birds' voices created a paranoid peace in me. I retreated into the last corner, enjoyed this sunny spot and was glad not to sit at the tables of the tour group. I ate my bread without sausage, because I must have hit a whole garlic clove at the first bite, and I didn't intend to be ostracized by my fellow travelers because of it.

Then I heard from a distance the travel group chattering, the meal seemed to be finished, and I went times rather to the meeting place with the bus.

He drove us to a hotel standing out from the landscape, which with its striking exterior façade in strong purple and green is an eye-catcher in the middle of the generously laid out hotel park. Apollo holds forth with its name. The expansive entrance hall welcomed us hospitably, and windows reaching down to the floor opened up a view of a pool in which a handful of people were cavorting. Very quickly I found my room on the second floor. Gabriele was also my roommate this time, as she had been in Antalya. After a few polite words I lay down on the bed and slept a little.

Then hunger drove me out to the nearby bazaar street. At the end of April it is still winter season. As one of the few tourists, I was a target for the shouts of the bazaar owners: T-shirt one euro, silver necklace one euro, beer one euro, and in astringent German with a Turkish accent: "Do you have a boyfriend, madame?

Curious, I walked down the street to the end, but turned back: the further away, the less German I found on the menu boards, until they were purely in Turkish.

I sat down in a traditional restaurant that had both: seating on oriental floor carpeting as well as a Turkish owner with clean Duisburg German. He grilled me tasty lamb chops, his wife baked cross-legged dough patties over an open fire, the two children served me the cutlery and wine (one euro).

Satisfied, I returned to the hotel, read a bit more and fell into a restful sleep well before midnight.

The alarm clock showed half past five, when the muezzin from the mosque called the faithful to prayer over loudspeakers resounding far and wide. But breakfast was not until nine.

There were raisin pancakes, feta cheese and butter, which tasted very sour, but I blamed that on my lack of sleep. Nescafé was the highest of coffee feelings. But after all, I could have had real Turkish tea.

The sun was shining warm and clear, and the tour guide's program for the next day was optional. I assessed the mountains in front of the hotel: paths were not visible, but the rocks did not seem very steep, the landscape clear, I would not get lost. As a precaution, I asked at the front desk if there were any dangerous animals. My imagination was fired by rattlesnakes. Or do they live somewhere else? "Only sheep with dogs," said the receptionist. As I climbed, I found myself getting a little brave. There was no real path, no people. I was rewarded with two plate-sized turtles crossing my trail. And with the emp-finding to belong to me here all alone, as I have not experienced for decades. It lifted me felt up to the sky! Halfway up, a real cry of joy escaped me. I recognized in the distance what the other bus tourists had paid dearly for: the snow-white rocks of Pamuk-kale! They were formed by lime deposits from the hot springs, I read. I had to decide. On the one hand, when I started here, I had felt great anticipation at the thought of climbing to the top. But this Pamukkale over there now appealed to me just as much. Would I be able to do both? Then the decision was made easy for me. The bushes were getting thicker and shaggier, prickly juniper prickled very unpleasantly, and there was now no path to be seen at all - all this made progress impossible.

It was only noon. I first lay down on a sprawling, smooth rock and enjoyed the sun. Since only my body was tired, I regaled my mind with some pages from my paperback.

Shortly before I finally arrived in the valley, I was happily surprised: the ancient city of Hierapolis, which the tour guide also visited with the paying group, was on my way to the limestone terraces. Again, I had reason to rejoice that my spontaneous decisions allowed the experiences to fall to me like gifts. Perhaps I was also magnetically attracted? Because I love ancient sites. A vast area of hundreds, perhaps thousands of one-man stone mausoleums with pointed roofs lay before me. And a huge parking lot with an estimated fifty tourist buses. From the guides of the tour groups I could pick up again and again some words in German, English and French and acquire me so some knowledge.

Some large mausoleums for the rich with their slaves were reconstructed comprehensibly. Behind this necropolis, the actual city follows. Hierapolis was built in pre-Hellenic times and was inhabited by Hittites and Lydians, among others. Afterwards, the Romans also added their mustard, most recently under Diocletian (in the third century B.C.), who greatly appreciated the hot springs in the area. From the size of the theater, with its fifteen thousand seats, one draws conclusions about the size of the city: sixty thousand inhabitants left behind these impressive stone ashlar masses. Today, elongated, brown-gray geckos multiply here in peace and quiet.

But I did not want to delve deeper into research, the long hike uphill-downhill through the hot sun had tired me. Therefore the bath "Antiques Terme" was welcome to me. The mere sight of the flowing warm water under palm trees refreshed me despite the tourist plastic tables with chips and Nescafé in plastic cups. I drank one such coffee and watched the happy bathers. Had I been prepared for all eventualities on my spontaneous tour, I would now have had bathing suits with me. I had left Munich three days ago at a temperature of two degrees!

Here the red poppies are in bloom, the vines are forming clearly visible panicles, the figs are the size of walnuts. The white limestone terraces are fun for the sense of sight and touch. One may enter them only barefoot, the warm spring water flows ankle-high and pleasantly over the feet. I walked all the way down, sometimes through gently flowing water warmed by the sun, sometimes on the dried snow-white limestone rocks finely rounded by the water.

There is room for thousands of tourists of all nationalities. The international smiles from the tickled soles of their feet connect them all. And I like to hear that the warm spring water also rejuvenates by ten years!

By now the afternoon was advanced and I was hungry. Most of all I wanted to go to the hotel. One of those public buses, of which there were very many here for all directions, would surely take me there.

Suddenly it became noticeable in an unpleasant way that I had set off so unprepared: I did not have the geography of the area in my head and the bus driver spoke only Turkish. Did I have to take the right or the left direction on the road? Where was my hotel, anyway? I only knew that Pamukkale belongs to Denizli. The bus there could not be so wrong. But when the bus drove and drove and my hotel didn't appear on the side of the road, I knew: This direction was not the right one. My stomach tightened. What now?

And suddenly I noticed in myself, what had already been a little bit hinted at, what had been completely lost in the last decades with the children: I am free to organize my day! I don't have to be home at eighteen o'clock and have dinner ready for the hungry pack. There is no homework to check, no bad lays to cheer up, no vocabulary to review, no exams to prepare, no dirty feet to put in the bathroom. How long have you, my children, been out of the house now? Still my imaginary daily routine is linked to you who grew up in the throng. Well, the effort was worth it when I look at you now with great pride: My Lisa, you are already 29, Raffael is 25, Markus is 30, Dominik is 32. Rightly you will laugh heartily - or with a throwing away hand - at this point: Our Muttl! She still hasn't realized that we are adults.

But this was one of the moments when I became aware of it: I can do what I want. You don't believe me? Oh yes, I would prove it to myself. Yes, I can come home when I want. I can take the bus I want. I could even ... that's all I can think of, because it's enough for me to feel this relief: I'm only responsible for myself. And so I decided at that moment to enjoy this bus ride all by myself and to use it to rest.

After a half-hour ride, we arrived in Denizli. I was overwhelmed by a large, noisy city of millions in the Turkish hinterland, where I seemed to be the only tourist. Bus after bus arrived at the bus station, others departed. Brown, furrowed faces, groups of people talking loudly to each other, Muslim women in Pardösü and foreign headscarves next to western dressed door-women, they all wanted to go home from work. Until my bus left for Pamukkale, I wanted to cruise through the city's shopping streets. Munich's main station district gives only an extremely distant idea of life on this street! Munich seems against Denizli, as if the people only whispered and walked on circled ways!

Back at the station I bought a kebab, which turned out to be the best I had ever eaten: it was slightly warm, the pita bread crispy, the vegetables fresh and crunchy, the sauce so tasty that I wanted to get another one. But I preferred to look for the right bus again. And that turned out to be the right thing to do. Because the bus didn't leave from where I got off, of course. But from where then? Which of the countless stops was mine? What did I do now? Signs indicating the destination - what use were they to me? I had never heard of the places indicated and had never read them. I had no idea what the final stop of the right bus, my bus, was called. I asked the one-word question, "Pamukkale?" I would know the way from there, because the landscape is flat and manageable. But no bus driver understood me. Everyone, however, waved their hands meaningfully in different directions, sometimes here and sometimes there. So I walked sometimes here and sometimes there, from one of the many buses to the other. My hands were getting sweatier and sweatier, but not from the war-men kebab! Then I came across a driver who spoke a little English. And he finally could imagine what I meant by my question, and I too now understood the dilemma: He pronounced the word Pamukkale in a way that again I had not understood at first.

Along the way, passengers who wanted a ride simply stood at the side of the road and held out their hands. There are no fixed stops. If you want to get off, you talk to the bus driver, and he stops at the exact spot on the fixed route. And there, there it had to be! Yes, I recognized the area. How good that the hotel wears such striking colors! With a tense attitude, I stood at the door. "Stop!", I exclaimed. Puzzled, the passengers looked at me. I must not have used a Turkish word. And already we had passed. I had no choice but to make large, sweeping hand and arm gestures. Then he stopped and let me out.

At eight I was finally back at the Apollon. And earned myself a dip in the hotel's vaunted thermal spa. Indeed, in addition to a whirlpool and foot spa, there is a large main pool, and it is 35 degrees. A reddish bubbling spring feeds it, and from a plaque on the wall I deduced that it flows into the pool at 53 degrees. You couldn't see anything in the water, it was so murky, but my body, once submerged, didn't like to get out from now on. Only twenty minutes is tolerable for the body, I read. I, on the other hand, could only stand the thermal water for ten minutes, but later I went in again and again. Only two hours later I had enough and moved long, very slowly toward the room. The glass of wine that I had planned to have in the restaurant the night before, and that I had been looking forward to, could no longer entice me. I exchanged a few more day's experiences with Gabriele - she had taken part in the bus tour to Hierapolis and Pamukkale - then we read a few more pages in our books. Gabi soon turned off her light. I wrote another text message to Peter and then I too was gone, filled with a wonderful day with so many experiences for body, mind and soul that I would not have dared to dream of.

And with that I close, your Muttl, who is unspeakably happy to have you big children, who therefore has both: the pleasure of having experienced you as toddlers, and currently the pleasure of also being allowed to see the world.

I apologize for still treating you as if you were in a crowd and not writing to you individually. Does that bother any of you? You have such a small age gap, you grew up in a cluster. That can also be seen as an advantage. I, for one, love tangles. When you pull on a tangle, the whole thing starts jumping. That's what I call being alive!

Your Muttl

**Life would be the lesser evil**

The drama of the following story forced me to change my perspective:

I am Rosi.

Peter is Rosi's husband.

Raffael is Rosi's son.

Katja is Raffael's girlfriend.

Rosi looked at the sea from the table of her mobile home. How good she had it, here in the sun of southern France! Her husband Peter had gone to watch the flamingos when his cell phone rang. Katja was calling, the display revealed. The girlfriend of her son Raffael. Surprised, Rosi answered.

"Katja, good to hear you!"

"I have to tell you something. Raffael came to the Schwabing hospital two days ago. Blind intestinal perforation."

"A breakthrough!" Rosi was startled. "He was in pain a few weeks ago, wasn't he? I immediately thought of appendicitis, but he didn't take it seriously. That's how he is, my son!"

"Yes, I called the doctor, who immediately called the ambulance."

Rosi took a deep breath.

"And how is he now?"

"Well, he's on an IV, still pretty weak." The intestinal contents had spread throughout the abdomen and caused a dangerous peritonitis, so he was given an antibiotic, she added. "But he's out of the woods, you don't need to worry."

Go home immediately!, thought Rosi. But it will take me two days to get home! My son is thirty and grown up.

Katja is with him. Nevertheless: I want to go home!

"Katja, you're a darling to let me know," she finally brought out.

"Don't worry about it," Katja had said. And yet she sounded like she could use some comfort herself. Now it was up to her, as the older, the more experienced, the mother of four children, the mother of Raphael, whom she must know very well. Katja certainly didn't want to hear that she was overwhelmed with this news.

Rosi's voice was a little too firm in her answer:

"They have good doctors at Schwabing Hospital. An appendix like that is routine for them."

"Yes, he's already out of the woods," Katja repeated.

When Peter returned from his walk, she immediately told him about the accident in fast motion - and in brief words conveyed her plan.

"Tonight we can still make it to Lyon if we leave right away. We'll spend the night at the motorway service station. And tomorrow morning we'll drive on first thing. We'll be there in the evening."

Peter understood immediately. Without making many words, he prepared everything for the trip.

Raphael was weak, but well. He struggled with pain when he got up, but he fought. And trusted that the doctors had given him the best anti-biotics and he would be well soon. Never before had he been sick. Just the usual kid stuff and a grip-pe now and then. The next few days he had to take walks to regain his strength. Rosi accompanied him. They talked warmly and happily with each other. And the south of France? It was a pity, but this was more important to Rosi.

Fourteen days later, Raphael sent his mother away again.

"You don't have to sit next to me, Muttl. Go back to the south of France. Thank you for being here. I can handle it now. I'll be painting again soon anyway, and going to college." He financed his philosophy studies with the sale of his paintings.

Reason and emotion battled inside Rosi. In fact, she had had a hard time organizing the three summer months off from her work. Should she sit at home and somehow keep herself busy, when Raphael no longer needed her? Or should she go to the Camargue again? Even if she had to go alone? Peter had decided to stay at home in Munich, because he didn't like the summer heat in the south anyway. He would check on Raphael from time to time, he promised.

Rosi was back on the Camargue beach when a few days later another call came from Katja.

"Raffael is in the hospital again. He has a new infection. He has already received the third antibioti-kaschub. And now he's had enough. He wants to come home tomorrow on his own and stop taking the anti-biotics." Katja sounded helpless.

"Self-healing powers, he says. Nature does it all, he says. He got very annoyed with the doctors. One meant this, the other meant that. He is convinced that nature has always helped best. Nature regulates everything, he says. The animals grow up naturally, only we humans make such a fuss. He's tired of antibiotics." Rosi heard the desperation in Katja's voice. "Maybe you can talk to him!"

Again, Rosi was torn between emotion and reason. Stop the antibiotics! How was the infection supposed to heal! After all, it wasn't an inflammation of the little finger, and people had sometimes died from that in the past. Raffael was already weakened! She had read on the Internet that ten percent of peri-tonitis cases were fatal. Ten percent, that is ten out of a hundred, how close Raphael was to being one of the ten! Her Raphael, the artist, the philosophy student, who had always questioned everything since he was born. Often she had even been grateful to him for that, often it had been fun for her to see well-worn concepts of life from a radically different point of view. But now he was surely also asking whether life really had to be sustained at any price, at what point the price was too high. "Antibi-otics," he had said, "we get far too many of them and that's why they often don't work at all anymore! The body has been given everything by nature to heal itself!"

Isn't that a bit naïve, Rosi secretly asked herself, when it comes to life and death? But he would not accept her objections, she knew that.

"Can't we just leave life as it is," he said, "as something fragile, fleeting, fragile, whose demise we have to accept?"

Rosi sped down the highway. Lyon, Bourg-en-Bresse, Besançon - on this stretch it was raining cats and dogs, she was clearly away from the warm south, here the cold and damp weather was lurking again. At least the rain washed the sand off her hood. Belfort, Mulhouse, Karlsruhe. Still two hundred and eighty kilometers to Munich. She was tired, almost unable to go on - wasn't she also risking her life with this insane journey? The big car, the long distance, the stress, just not too much rest, arrive, finally arrive, just not too late, she urgently had to arrive today and see her Raffael again, before ...

At midnight she arrived at the apartment of Katja and Raffael. Peter was also there and took her in his arms.

"He's not well," was all he said. "He's fallen asleep, has a high fever. Go in to him."

Suddenly Rosi felt a block. She remembered the conversations with Raphael. About life and its value and meaning. Whether we didn't overestimate everything. Whether it wasn't sometimes better to let go, Raffael had said. Not to exhaust our possibilities of influence at any price, but to let run what is in the flow. Life flows, he had said, and it is beautiful. "I have had a beautiful life," he had said. "Maybe if I give my life back to nature, I won't have to go through a lot of things." He had spoken like that at the kitchen table just a year ago, for no apparent reason. It had been a mental game at that point. Rosi felt sick. The effort, all that. But there was no time for that now. He was in a bad way. There was danger to his life. Such an inflammation, raging in the body, had to be stopped before ... But doctors and their half-knowledge annoyed her son, he didn't want to follow them anymore, that's what he had said on the phone. What alternatives were there?

He also didn't want to hear the tips from acquaintances anymore: I know a celebrity doctor! And: Why don't you go to my homeopath, he's great. And: You absolutely have to get a second opinion from a specialist. And: A shaman helped me in a similar situation. Or: Chicken broth! Eat a lot of chicken broth, it has an antibacterial effect, my grandmother used to cook it when I had the flu.

Raffael now rejects everything, Katja had told her. "I listen to my body," he only replies. "It knows what it needs. I eat what I have an appetite for. I move in a way that doesn't cause me pain. My body knows itself better than all the doctors in the world."

And now Rosi stood there, with Peter. "He's not well," he had just said. Rosi rushed into Raf-fael's room. Shuddered at his emaciated face. She stroked her son's hot cheeks, felt his forehead, took his bony hand. "I'm here," she said softly, feeling tears welling up.

He was master of his life, he had said in a discussion a year ago. He knows and decides for himself what he wants. People want to influence the lives of others far too much. It was nobody's business how he thought and acted, because he was not endangering anyone but himself.

But now he was no longer sitting at the kitchen table in full health. Now it was really a matter of life and death. And Rosi's fear, yes, her own terrible fear. Yes, she was now affected. She felt she had to do something to cope with the situation herself. To do nothing, just to do nothing, that was terrible, she wouldn't last a second longer! She had to see a doctor urgently.

Yes, she would get involved. She was Rosi, the mother who loved her Raffael terribly. She would not be able to live with the thought that she had not done everything in her power. Yes, a fierce interference in his life that was. But wasn't it also about her and Katja? How did she think? It was about the rest of the family, about the other people, how could they live with the fact that they had left Raphael believing in some fairy tales, in the middle of the big city, practically in the immediate vicinity of a good hospital?

She only wanted to do, to act, to do something, to counteract the terrible fear, to finally do something, to find the best doctor, yes, -

Was she allowed to hinder her Raphael? Preserve his life at all costs, when he didn't even want that? Her generation had had to deal with a political system that despised humanity. Was she now allowed to impose the rules of her generation on him, she who had grown into the view: medicine will preserve your life, no matter what the cost. Was she, just because she had become his mother at that time, now entitled to impose on Raphael as an adult the life that he did not want at all?

But perhaps in a few years he would even be grateful to her for interfering? And wouldn't she herself perish from the guilt of not having done anything to save him, by whatever means?

Peter and Katja had joined them. They looked at her, but Rosi said nothing. They did not know the conversations Rosi had had with Raphael. Peter was not his father, who had died a few years ago of a serious illness. By now it was two o'clock in the morning. Rosi was infinitely tired from the long drive. Peter helped Katja to unfold the sofa bed and prepare the bed. Then fatigue prevailed over Rosi's carousel of thoughts.

When she woke up in the morning, she heard Katja humming a little song in the kitchen.

"Any news from Raphael?"

"Guess what, he was in the mood for cereal! And he asked me to bring a paintbrush and painting palette. Surely he can't live without them!" Her eyes sparkled with life. Then the two women lay in each other's arms. Their embrace had never been as intimate as it was at that moment.

**Afterwards**

When a woman travels, she has something to tell - the old quotation, which we know in the male form, is of course also true for women. Especially for a Muttl, as the children affectionately and indulgently call their little mother, who ventures out of her comfort zone with her grown-up children. And in the process, Muttl learns a few things. In this constellation, leaving the comfort zone means not only traveling to previously unseen countries and cities, but above all: rediscovering the child in its adult form and finding a new way of dealing with it. Oh, you can do a lot of things wrong!

In this story book, I have described concise experiences in five stories. I asked the children if they would agree if I wrote these stories in the way they could have appropriated them.

"All right," Dominik, Markus, Lisa, and Raffael (this time in order of age, starting with the oldest) said mischievously, "if they could have been like that, that doesn't mean they happened exactly like that."

And with that, they're fine.

**Thank you ...**

... dear Raphael, for allowing me to pretend that the stories are about you.

... dear Lisa, dear Dominik, dear Markus (today the lady first!), that you let yourselves be transformed into companions on my life journey.

... dear Markus, dear Dominik, dear Lisa (this time in any order), that you can stand to let your youngest play the main role in this book, if he played it at all.

... that you exist, the four of you, yes, thank you! You already know what for: My life journey would have been boring without your enriching addition.

**You dear moms, moms, moms, readers ...,**

It's a feat that no one wants to miss: raising your children. It means decades of construction, and the decades don't stop when the children are out of the house. And yet!

Often we mothers rely on our feelings in difficult situations, on what else when life is not going straight? But the older the children get, the less they want to hear our feelings. But what then? They can read arguments in philosophy books themselves, they don't need us for that.

As their mother, I have always tried to do everything "right" (that's a grade three ...). Even in my and their most difficult life situation: the divorce of their parents, which was anything but smooth and after which I somehow felt like a single parent.

How are you with your children?

If I could give you, dear moms, a little courage as a mother accomplice with my stories or put an understanding smile on your lips, I'm happy. If you say: If she managed to do that, I can do it too.

Write me your impressions, insights and experiences - from this book and from your life with children. What do your children call you? You can contact me on my channels and find more information about my (life) journeys:

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My mother had a lot of

trouble with me, but I think

she enjoyed it.

MARK TWAIN

**From**

**IRMGARD ROSINA BAUER**

**have already been published:**

This book is a letter to Marieke, an acquaintance from Hamburg. And a homage to the mountains, despite all their dangers and imponderables that have to be overcome. A book for all those who feel a longing for the mountains - or who don't even know it yet. An encouragement to set out and dare the adventure "al-pen" - or "life"? - to dare.

Together with Isa, the author fulfills a wish of her heart: to undertake a tour of several days through the mighty Lech Valley high Alps with their enormous peaks, including overnight stays in high-altitude huts. Without a supermarket on the way, of course. Marieke lives in Hamburg and would also like to visit the high Alps. Will she be put off by the experiences - with all their joys and fears - of the two Munich girls, or will she really get a taste for mountain air?

Volume I of Rosi's travel stories

BoD - Books on Demand, Norderstedt

ISBN 978-3-7543-0080-0 (paperback)

ISBN 978-3-7543-0080-6 (e-book)

"I love the mountains. I didn't always know that was the case. And in general, I didn't know much about what I loved and what I didn't. Life came at me, unfiltered, for decades I said yes to everything, and it was somehow okay that way - until I was slowed down by a burnout. So it didn't go on like that, but how then?"

Rosi is fifty-two. Over the past three decades, she has raised four children and helped her husband in his deli. There was no time to deal with herself and her own needs. Now she is fulfilling an old wish and setting off on her own to the south of France. With Merkür, her mini-van, with a lot of fear of her own spontaneity and with little money: she only wants to spend ten euros a day. While she often reaches her limits, she gives free rein to her adventurous spirit and is able to recognize and put many of her fears into perspective; and, by the way, she is able to cast off her old life. Her poor sense of direction is only one of many obstacles in her ongoing search for optimal relationships.

Travel novel - to the south of France and inwards

BoD - Books on Demand, Norderstedt 2020, 320 pages

ISBN 978-3-7504-8051-3 (paperback)

ISBN 978-3-7504-8051-6 (e-book)

Sophie aka Susanne aka S. is trapped in her principles: A macho man is allowed to be a macho man, and a marriage must be maintained at all costs. Especially since Sophie has four children with her husband and divorce was not as common "back then" as it is today.

The different roles of women in the stories of a single woman let us see deep into her heart over decades. Their common goal is to be able to say one day: I love my life.

On her way there, Sophie, alias Susanne, alias S., gains new freedoms and yet falls back again and again. She looks for recognition and suffers a burn-out as a result. She wants to get out of her opera role, but the way there is long ...

"Life could be so hard" is a gripping life story in thirteen and a half mostly true stories.

Novel in thirteen and a half stories

tredition Verlag, Hamburg 2016, 153 pages

ISBN 978-3-7345-7098-8 (paperback)

ISBN 978-3-7345-7098-0 (e-book)

More stories ...

... I have in progress. Whether as a traveler through the real world or through the light and dark landscapes of existence - it remains exciting in my life!

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