Someone Knows

Trude Teige

Someone Knows

Crime

Aschehoug

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The sea sings, novel, 2002

Lean against the wind, novel, 2004

Someone knows, crime, 2009

A helping hand, crime, 2010

Betrayal, crime, 2012

The Girl Who Stopped Talking, crime novel,

2014 *Grandma Danced in the Rain*, novel, 2015

The Patient, crime novel, 2017

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1

August 18, 1966

The boy pulled down his pants. Not a word was said. Tears pushed their way out and ran down his cheeks when the spanking hit him, even though he tried everything he could not to cry. He counted inside himself. One, two, three, four, five - halfway.

He was so terribly scared. He didn't understand why he had to be here, why he had been brought here, away from his mother and father. He told himself every night when he went to bed that he had to be a good and big boy, he didn't have to wet the bed. Because if he behaved well, someone would surely take him home again. It would only be for a few days, Dad had said. And dad was really nice.

But he woke up almost every night, crying, wet with sweat and pee. For the first few days, they just changed his bed, looked at him sternly and told him to stop. It didn't help. He was so scared, his stomach hurt all the time, and his heart too. They didn't realize that's why he was peeing himself.

Six, seven, eight, nine, ten. He pulled up his pants, but didn't meet the gaze of the man who hit him, just stared at the floor, grinding his teeth to force back the tears, but they kept flowing.

Still with his neck bent, he walked out into the hallway. The man stopped, opening the door to the closet under the stairs. He would have done anything to avoid going in there. He would have preferred another ten strokes. It hurt when someone hit him, but it hurt a lot less than to

sit in the dark and to know that he was all alone. All alone in the world.

He was only five years old, but it wasn't long before he turned six. And one day he would be big and strong. Then he would fight back. When he thought about it, he became less afraid. But only a little. He curled up on the floor, wrapped his arms around himself and cried silently. He didn't want anyone to hear him.

He was not allowed to cry.

March 5, 2002

He stood completely still at the edge of the forest on the other side of the pond and looked towards the house. He had stood like this for a long time, motionless. He was dressed in black; a black hat, black trousers and a black hoodie. The rucksack on his back was also black, and he had everything he needed for the next few days.

It was going to take time. He wanted it to take time.

He looked at his watch, turned his gaze up to the sky above the tree crowns, waited for darkness. Heavy clouds rushed across the sky. Soon it would start to rain, because it had become milder in recent days. He felt a slight suction in his diaphragm, but he wasn't nervous or worried, just excited.

The time was right. Soon it would be complete, the balance would be restored.

The only thing that disturbed him was the smell of the forest. He loved that smell; the smell of security, the smell of goodness. The forest was his friend. It was where he retreated to. When he lay down in his secret place in the shelter under the big pine tree, where no one used to go, it felt like lying down next to a big embrace; he was small and surrounded by a kindness that no human could give him. Then he could sleep without the painful thoughts. He was completely safe. Nothing bad could happen.

He closed his eyes, for a brief moment he could hear sounds from the distant past; the bells of the sheep in the meadow, the cows grazing and the horse whinnying in the paddock, he smelled the freshly cut grass, the stinging sensation of sun-dried hay, the scent of summer, warm moss on large stones, and he felt that all this was as close as if it were true. Here. Right now. The way he had thought so many times as a child, the way he had felt when he was alone and could dream that everything was there for him, that everything was good. But it wasn't true, because it wasn't the way life was, not the way it had been. It was just a pretense.

He let his breath out slowly through his nose, opened his eyes and looked around. Everything was dilapidated and overgrown, it was completely silent, as if there was no life here.

He had to be careful to stay focused, not to take the smells in too much, not to feel what he never got, what he lost, just think about what he had to

do, do what he had spent so long preparing. His whole life.

Quietly he walked along the edge of the forest, around the pond, to the back of the barn, then he ran to the stables, crept along the wall, ran across a small open space until he was at the back of the house. He stopped, listened with all his senses heightened, thought for a brief second he saw a shadow in the manger down by the fence, stood perfectly still, but never heard or saw anything.

Who would think of coming here on such a lovely evening, he thought, smiling indulgently to himself. In all the days and evenings he had stood at the edge of the forest, he had hardly ever seen strangers, only a few who had gone for a walk or jogged on the path past the house.

He put the bag down, opened it, put on his thin latex gloves and pulled his hat well down over his head. Then he crept close to the wall, bent under the kitchen window, went up the stairs and into the vestibule. He heard the dogs barking as he raised his hand, knocked and went in without waiting for an answer, because he knew they were home. They were always home.

2

Kajsa Coren weaved her way between the parked cars and ran towards the stairwell while pointing the remote control over her shoulder and locked the car, walked quickly up two flights of stairs, opened the door marked "Økonomitorg" and stepped out into the open space in the main garage.

She looked at her watch and sped up.

Four-year-old Thea had made a complete fool of herself this morning. She insisted on wearing her princess dress. All attempts to explain that it was far too cold to wear the thin dress, that there was no carnival in the kindergarten, were useless. In the end, she gave up. Those who worked at the nursery were allowed to believe what they wanted about her inability to set limits for her child. Thea had wiped her tears and was beaming like the sun in her princess dress, until it was time to put on her outerwear in the hallway and she discovered that she hadn't brought her pink booties home from kindergarten the day before. She couldn't wear the blue cheroxes, they didn't match the dress.

At this point, Kajsa's patience was exhausted. What's more, seven-year-old Anders had to be at school at half past eight. She drove the car up to the front door, picked up the shrieking Thea and placed her in the child seat. Her little body as tense as a bow, and she had to force her down into the seat to fasten the seatbelt. Anders got into the car without a word. She squeezed her eyes shut tightly for a second. Okay, then. Another day. This is going to be fine. Life is good.

Just then the phone rang.

– Hi, it's Kajsa. She tried to sound calm, but didn't quite succeed.

– Hello? Is this Mrs. Coren? said a male voice.

– Yes, she said.

– Am I interrupting?

– No, she replied. But the lie was revealed by Thea's screams.

– I don't know if you ... I think that .. Are you in a hurry?

– A little, what is it about?

– No, it's not that important. I understand that it's not a good time.

Couldn't the person just briefly and quickly say what this was about? She kept getting calls from people who wanted something from her, who took a long time to get to the point, who needed to be persuaded to say what was on their minds, unknown people who had seen some report she had made about whiplash, cancer treatment or infertility. Or it was "the tormentors".

All journalists have one or more "tormentors", people who constantly call, who in one way or another have fallen in love with a journalist, especially after having had "their story" told once. They call to get more of the same, more attention, more focus on their situation, they are bitter at society, often with good reason, but at some point they have completely lost touch with reality, and bitterly shift all the blame for their miserable lives onto others; parents, teachers, doctors, judges, politicians and journalists.

But this time it wasn't someone she knew.

– It's a matter ... you who are concerned about the weak in society should ... Why aren't they punished? were fragments she picked up.

– I can't hear what you're saying, can you call me later? she said.

The man replied something, but she couldn't hear what. Then there was silence at the other end.

When they arrived at the school, with the princess still screaming in the back seat, Anders made no move to get out.

– Now you have to hurry up, it's ringing in, she said. She meant to sound calm and affectionate, but she didn't manage, stroking the seven-year-old's cheek to take the edge off her overly harsh and impatient voice.

– I don't want to go to school, he said. That was the last missing bit. She groaned.

– Of course you do, all children like to go to school.

– Not me, he said assertively, It's boring.

– Okay, but we'll talk about that later . Now go.

– Then you need to come with me.

– I can't leave Thea's side.

– I don't want to go.

She looked at him, his face was so naked, he was about to cry. She wanted to pull close, to tell everything would be okay. But she didn't have the time.

Kajsa sighed heavily. - Okay. She locked Thea in the car and ran towards the school gate with Anders hanging reluctantly in her hand. When she said goodbye, Anders started crying and clung to her. In the end, she had to tear herself away.

She blinked hard, gave him a hasty hug that was way too hard and ran back to the pink princess who was still howling so loudly that Kajsa could hear it from afar.

An elderly lady stood looking through the window of the car, smiled and waved to Thea.

– How are you treating that poor child! she said angrily as Kajsa unlocked the car. You can't just leave ...

Then her facial expression . She looked scrutinizingly at Kajsa.

– Don't I know you?

- No, said Kajsa, turning her back on her and getting into the car while the lady's white poodle barked accusingly at her.

- Rag dog! She swung out of the parking lot, now unable to swallow the lump in her throat anymore. She was wiping her tears as she drove to the nursery, accompanied by Thea's howling rage from the back seat.

All the time she imagined Anders' face. Is he being bullied, is he being left out by the other children? Why is he never invited home with any of the other boys? Why doesn't he want to go to school? What's wrong with him?

He so gentle, not one of the tough boys, the loud ones, the physically robust ones, he cried easily, he was so vulnerable. She

felt like a failure. Never a morning that just flies by you, when everything is going just fine. Why am I so tired all the time? What am I doing wrong?

After she had dropped Thea off at kindergarten, the phone rang again. She recognized the voice of the man who had called earlier. Kajsa sighed quietly: "Yes, hello again," she said in a friendly manner, "What did you want to talk to me about?"

– "I don't know if it's interesting to you, but there's so much talk about giving children in orphanages redress and compensation, and I wonder why no one is talking about punishment?"

– How do you mean?

– Yes, many of those who committed these crimes are still alive. Why should they get away with it?

– Are the cases statute-barred?

– "Statute-barred? Such abuse never becomes statute-barred", the man said in a hard voice.

He had a point, Kajsa's interest was piqued. She got his phone number and promised to call back to make an appointment to meet another day.

The conversation was buzzing in Kajsa's head when she was finally on her way to work. She had called from her car to say she was late for the meeting she had arranged with the head of the Social Affairs Committee in Parliament.

Kajsa was going to show him a report from a nursing home in Oslo. It showed that only one nurse was responsible for almost fifty elderly people in need of care at night. She had already edited the story, but wanted to show it to some of the parliamentary representatives from the opposition before it was sent, so that she knew what to expect for the follow-up report with political reactions the next day.

He had slept on the sofa in the living room. He felt stiff and sore when he woke up in the gray light. He hadn't slept well all night, his memories wouldn't leave him alone and he remembered more than he wanted to. All the things he had struggled to forget came so close to him.

The two elderly people were huddled together in their respective dog cages. The night before, he had killed the dogs and thrown them into the old manure cellar.

It was absolutely pathetic that they had dogs, two huge, ugly dogs. He had seen how they cared for them the time he observed them, seen how they stroked

them with loving hands, she could sit on the stairs for a long time and just stroke and stroke them, bore her face into their fur and chat with them. It was enough to make him sick.

When he had come in the night before, they had been sitting at the kitchen table, each with their own drink. The bottle stood between them on the table.

– "Good evening," he said. The tone was polite.

The woman had stood halfway up from the table, shushing the dogs that were mucking out the cages.

– What ... Who are you? she cried, startled.

He didn't answer right away, just stood by the door and looked at her. She was old and fat. Her hair couldn't have been washed for a long time, it clung to her scalp.

– "Didn't you hear that she asked you?" the man snorted. He had dark brown corners of his mouth. - Then answer!

– Sit down. He said it to her without raising his voice.

It gave him a good feeling to see her slump down on the chair again. For a few short seconds, he had felt how the nervous system grabbed him, made him small and defenseless as she stared at him and stood up. But now he was in control again, now he was the strong one.

He walked over to the table, grabbed the bottle and poured the contents into the sink.

– What you doing? the man shouted. This time it was he who stood up. The woman remained seated. He walked over to the desk and poked the man in the chest with his index finger. That was enough, he slumped down heavily on the chair, said nothing, curled up a little and looked at him with his mouth half open.

– There's no need to get excited, he said calmly. He smiled kindly at them.

None of them answered.

3

Kajsa ran uphill in the underground tunnel from the parliamentary garage to the elevator that would take her up to Vandrehallen on the third floor. In the middle of the tunnel was an elevator switch that she pressed as she rushed past. She ran the last few meters and stood breathless in front of the elevator door. The board showed that the elevator passed the ground floor, then the basement floor before reaching the lower floor. She took a step back when she saw that there were people in the elevator.

The first to step out was the head of security at the Norwegian Parliament. He was a stocky man in his early sixties with a military background. He was broad-shouldered, with gray hair in a short sergeant's cut. He always reminded her of the elephant colonel in the Mowgli cartoon. She expected him to light up at the sight of a female journalist, as was his habit, to put his hand on her shoulder and say with a broad, teasing smile: "Young woman, how beautiful you look today." He did put his hand on her shoulder, but only to push her gently but firmly against the wall. Behind him came two ambulance-clad men with a stretcher between them. On the stretcher was former Prime Minister Trygve Jonsrud. He, the outdoorsman, always unashamedly brown-skinned, was gaunt, pale gray. His eyes met hers for a brief second, gaze unfocused, his mouth open, his breath coming in short gasps. Behind the stretcher came the party's secretariat leader. Kajsa grabbed him by the arm. - What happened?

He turned away: "You haven't seen this," he whispered.

The whole entourage walked with quick steps down the tunnel. She followed, some distance behind, stood inside the glass doors of the garage and watched the former prime minister being placed in an ambulance.

– What has happened?" she repeated when the head of security came back in, after the ambulance had driven through the gate and into the lock.

He made a zipping motion with his thumb and pointed his finger over his mouth.

– But is he okay? She didn't give up. - Is it serious?

– You'll have to ask others about that.

– But just answer one question: Do any other press people know about this?

He looked at her thoughtfully: "I don't think so," he said and went into the guardroom.

She had to call the duty manager. This was hot news. Not just because a politician had taken a turn for the worse in the country's national assembly, but because it was him, the party leader, the former minister of state - and, not least, because of all the noise that had surrounded him. Probably an extra broadcast. She dialed the number for the desk. Damn! No signal. She ran to the elevator and took it up to Vandrehallen. A journalist from Dagbladet was talking to one of the FRP backbenchers at one of the small tables. She went into Eidsvollsgalleriet, where she was all alone, and dialed the number to the desk again.

Forty-five minutes later, the camera and lights were set up in Vandrehallen.

– Direction to Kajsa, can you hear me? It was the producer talking to her on the ear.

– "Loud and clear," she replied, holding up a thumb to the camera.

The hall was starting to fill up with people. Curious journalist colleagues from newspapers, radio and other TV channels stood behind and to the side of the photographer. It was crowded at the parliament today. The Minister of Defense was called to the carpet to answer whether she really believed that she had no control over the Armed Forces, as she had said on Skavlan on Friday. The board in Vandrehallen, where all the representatives were registered when they were at work, showed something as rare as that they were virtually complete. Everyone wanted to be

there when a minister was grilled in the parliament hall. Only a real government crisis was more fun than a minister who got to have a go in front of a packed hall, and MPs, who hardly anyone had heard of, could show a minister that it was the parliament that decided, that stood above the government.

– "What's going on, Kajsa?" shouted a journalist from VG.

– Special broadcast, she replied.

– Will there be a motion of no confidence against the Minister of Defense? another newspaper colleague asked in surprise.

She didn't answer, just smiled. She removed the elastic from the horse's tail, ran the brush through her hair, powdered her nose, put on some lipstick and filled her lungs with air, released her breath slowly, felt the tingling in her fingertips. They know nothing. I'm alone with the news. "Breaking news." Yes!

More and more politicians arrived, whispered questioningly to each other, asked the journalists what was going on, received only a shrug in response, and stood expectantly looking at her. She noticed that there were also some backbenchers from the Labor Party there. So they probably knew nothing. But she was going to tell them that their boss had collapsed.

– Two minutes to air, she was told on the earpiece.

– Wasn't Geir supposed to come?" she asked. I have no idea where he is, does anyone know?

A colleague from the political department came running up the stairs.

– Geir is on his way, he said breathlessly.

The channel's political commentator and head of political coverage, Geir Hermansen, arrived shortly afterwards. He excitedly took the last two steps in an elegant jump and walked calmly over to her. He stood there effortlessly in his designer glasses and Armani suit; tall, slim, blond. The ladies lay flat after Geir. That is, those who didn't know him. He loved it, loved flirting with them, getting them exactly where he wanted, buying them wine, preferably white wine, "women look best with narrow glasses of stout. Can you think of anything worse than a woman throwing down beer?" When it was getting close to closing time, he would say, "No, you can't come home with me, because then Svein will get all cranky." "Svein?" the lady would say, puzzled, and perhaps add: "Is that your cat?" as she leaned against him, laughing. But Geir would answer truthfully that it was his roommate. Then he would laugh out loud, but not maliciously, at

the expression on the woman's face. He didn't mean to be mean to these young women who hadn't been around long enough to know what everyone else knew: That he was gay.

– Where have you been? she asked irritably.

– In the training room in the basement, he replied calmly. He smiled: Nice case you've got going, by the way. What do you know about it?

Kajsa quickly briefed him on what had happened.

– What are you going to say? asked Geir.

– I have no idea, she said, but I guess I'll take the facts, and you can think out loud about the party leadership battle, the inhuman pressure, etc.

– Okay, then. We'll take it in our stride. He brushed off his lapel, as if there were some debris there, but there never was. I've done this before, he said smartly.

It crackled on the ear.

– Kajsa. This is Annette in the studio. We have received confirmation from Rikshospitalet that Jonsrud has been hospitalized, but that's all they will say, what should I ask you?

Kajsa only had time to suggest a couple of questions to the news anchor before countdown began. "Ten seconds," she said, holding up her hand with splayed fingers twice towards Geir without taking her eyes off the camera.

He had to smile to himself as he gave them breakfast. They had to have food, he wasn't going to let them starve to death. Afterwards, he let the man out of the cage to let him go to the bathroom. The woman had to stay in the cage, he wasn't sure about her, she seemed stronger than him. The man staggered with stiff, unsteady steps across the kitchen floor.

They had stopped talking. At first she had been chattering hysterically, then he cracked and slapped her, even though he had planned to stay completely cool and calm, completely controlled. Afterwards they said nothing, he could see the fear in them now. Her eyes had taken on a tinge of apathy, as if she was just now seeing everything that was going to happen. There was no strength, no resistance in her. She had really lost herself.

He went into the living room and sat down, couldn't bear the sight of them, felt how the old, frightened eyes clung to him, no matter what he did, they watched him. They also smelled bad, like old dirt and sweat, like an unwashed toilet.

He turned on the TV. Zapped between the channels. On Channel 4 there was only a poster with "Straks: Special broadcast". What had happened

now? He waited, and after a few seconds the news vignette began to scroll on the screen.

- "Good morning, this is Channel 4 with a special broadcast," said anchorwoman Annette Strøm, one of the channel's most high-profile journalists, known as much for her tough calls as her diction.

- Former Prime Minister and party leader Trygve Jonsrud has been admitted to Rikshospitalet after having taken ill an hour ago. And reporter Kajsa Coren, you're at the Storting, what can you tell us about what has happened?

Kajsa looked earnestly into the camera and talked about what she had witnessed. In the hour or so since she saw the party leader on the stretcher, she had managed to get out a little more information. Trygve Jonsrud had collapsed shortly after arriving at the office. It was his secretary who had found him. Jonsrud hadn't answered a call she put through. She thought it was strange, because she had just said good morning to him and seen him go into his room.

Kajsa had noticed that both the parliamentary president and the party secretary had entered the office of Jon Berg, the party's crown prince.

They all stiffened when they realized that she knew what had happened, and slammed the door behind them. But shortly afterwards, the party secretary, Johannes Lier, came out again.

– You can't go out with this, he said with a serious expression and his arms folded across his chest. More than ever, he looked like a preacher: Thin hair the same color as his gray suit and a serious, low-key, almost angry voice that could earnestly preach the good news from the pulpit at the People's House, suitable for forcing people into revival - if there were any doubters.

He lowered his chin and peered over his steel-rimmed glasses. She almost expected him to ask her if she had accepted the Party in her heart. He didn't, instead he repeated: "You can't go out with this, do you understand? He locked eyes with her.

Kajsa resisted the urge to respond rudely, annoyed by the insistent and lecturing tone.

– Why not? she said.

– We haven't been able to reach the family yet.

Kajsa thought about it, Do other press people know about this?

– No, no one else.

– Guaranteed?

– Yes.

– Okay, I trust you, but on one condition: I will be first. As soon as the wife knows, you contact me, immediately. If I don't hear anything within half an hour, we go on the air. It can't be that hard to get hold of her. Deal?

– Yes, he said and turned to back into the office.

– And…

– Yes? He turned around halfway.

– When you're ready to comment, Jon Berg will do it with me first. Live. Okay?

– Uh... okay, I'll check.

The duty manager felt that the risk of other members of the press finding out about what had happened was too great. He wanted to go on air immediately. He scolded Kajsa for being naïve, but she stuck to her guns: "I have an agreement. In the long run, you can only lose by breaking agreements," she said. She hoped she was doing the right thing.

Twenty minutes later, Lier called to say that Jonsrud's wife was on her way to Rikshospitalet.

– How is his condition? she asked.

Lier fell for it. - He's being examined.

– Can I say that the condition is not critical, at least?

After a brief pause for thought, she got the confirmation she needed - but without quoting me, he added.

She had promised to do so.

Now she stood and said just that, told what she knew, but gave no sources, lightly emphasized with one hand that the situation did not seem to be life-threatening, before handing over to Geir.

She clarified in the question that they didn't know anything about what was wrong with Trygve Jonsrud, but it was safe to say that he had had a very tough time for a long time.

Geir commented the situation in the party, the power struggle and all the criticism Trygve Jonsrud had been subjected to, about party members who had allowed themselves to be interviewed anonymously in VG and stabbed their own leader in the back. It was clear that this had been a great strain on him, not least when former ministers from the time when Jonsrud was prime minister had stated - also anonymously - that he was completely inept as

head of the government's cabinet and thus more than insinuated that he was incompetent as the country's prime minister.

Out of the corner of her eye, she could see press and politicians crowding as close to them as possible. It was completely silent, as if they were collectively holding their breath to take it all in. Everyone's eyes were on her as she concluded by pointing out that the Rikshospital had confirmed that Trygve Jonsrud had been hospitalized, but that they had said nothing about his state of health.

- As far as Channel 4 is aware, Jonsrud is doing well, and his condition is not believed to be life-threatening. We will return from the Parliament as soon as we know more.

Geir tapped her on the shoulder: "Damn good!" he said before the other journalists threw themselves over their mobile phones to call their respective editors, as if they were a bunch of synchronized swimmers.

At the same time, her cell phone vibrated in her pocket. She picked it up to answer it, but discovered that it was only the alarm alerting her that she had made an appointment that day. PARENTS' COFFEE IN THE KINDERGARTEN AT. 15, it said.

It was her turn to pick up the children. She had promised Anders that she would pick him up early from SFO so that he could go to kindergarten, which he had attended before starting school.

She had forgotten about it.

Now everything is going

wrong. Again.

She called Aksel. - I can't make it to kindergarten today. Can you ...

He interrupted her: "Kjell Lauritzen and I have to finish the report today, we're meeting at three o'clock, you know that, right?" he said impatiently.

– Yes, I know, but couldn't you postpone it? Jonsrud...

– I can't do it. You know that I'm in the middle of this trial. Aksel was clearly annoyed.

– But if Kjell can't come home ...

– No, he interrupted her.

She wanted to tell him that it was his turn to prioritize the kids over work, his turn to be there for her, but decided against it. There was no point. So she hung up, didn't even say goodbye.

She dialed her mother's mobile number, but got no answer. As soon as she hung up, the duty manager called.

– Brilliant work, Kajsa - NTB, NRK, TV 2, all the online newspapers, the whole lot are quoting us. It's already full of press outside Rikshospitalet. Steinar leaves directly from there at one o'clock. But he couldn't find out much. Are you ready, too?

– Yes, of course. Will there be more extra broadcasts throughout the afternoon?

– Absolutely. We're going full throttle. And you have to stay with us until the last broadcast tonight. No one else has their own journalist as an eyewitness. It's just awesome!

– Okay. Kajsa hung up. She looked thoughtfully at her phone. She had to find someone to pick up the kids. Her mother was the best, especially when it was time for parents' coffee. They always thought it was great to be picked up by her. She dialed her number again. There was no answer. She tried the home number. No answer there either. Where was she?

Why was she always the one who had to sort things out, organize, make all the wheels turn? She felt her anger wash over her. It was always Aksel's job, his meetings, his life. How many times had she picked the kids up from kindergarten because he couldn't make it? Or changed shifts for his sake? What about her? Her job? He hadn't even asked why she couldn't pick up the kids. As if it didn't interest him.

Maybe that's how it is, that I don't interest him anymore?

Kajsa sighed and joined the rest of the group sitting in the restaurant drinking coffee. Everyone on duty in the political editorial department had arrived at Parliament. Now they had to plan the sessions throughout the day and allocate tasks. She looked at Geir, nodding with interest at what he was saying. But her thoughts were distracted; the disappointment of the kids when she didn't show up for the parents' coffee, Thea would sit out in the hallway and cry her brave tears while the other children enjoyed themselves with their parents.

She looked at the faces around her, saw how excited they were, standing in the middle of the circus ring ready to perform their acts.

I am not happy.

By the previous evening, she had changed her mind. She had gone out onto the terrace and sat down. Two children were

asleep in their beds. Two healthy, beautiful children. She could hear their laughter when she thought of them. That happy laughter. Nothing was wrong with them, nothing bad had happened to them. They were perfect. She loved this home, this house, loved the view, the location. And she had a husband who was succeeding in life. He was asleep in bed, recovering from the hustle and bustle of the day, he was healthy and beautiful, too.

She had been tired, had a feeling that life was an eternal rush. But after a glass of wine, she had thought: I feel good.

- "You're crazy," Aksel had said as he stuck his head out to her on his way to bed. "It's a good thing no one can see you," he said, shaking his head indulgently and exasperated that she was sitting outside. In March.

She wished he had laughed. That he said crazy in a different way. As if he thought it was funny, that he wasn`t upset about having a wife who wasn't like other wives. It had started the summer Anders was born. They had moved into the house overlooking the Oslofjord just before the birth.

It wasn't long before Anders started sleeping through the night after his last breastfeeding. One such evening, it was early September but still unusually mild in summer, she had gone out onto the terrace. It was dark and quiet in all the other houses, only a slight breeze was rising from the sea, the sound of a snail could be heard.

In the distance, there was a faint rustle in the leaves of the trees. She was filled with an indescribable feeling of well-being that originated in this child she had just held to her breast. She had carried a healthy child. She had never felt so brave and proud. She poured herself a glass of wine - her first in over a year - and a cigar and put on her mp3 player. Eva Cassidy's beautiful voice crept into her earphones, into her soul: "For you there'll be no crying, for you the sun will be shining."

She took a small sip of wine, closed her eyes and rolled it around in her mouth for a long time, felt the tingling on her palate, swallowed, opened her mouth and took a deep breath, "because I feel that when I'm with you, it's all right, I know it's right".

Just then it had started to rain. Parts of the patio were covered and at first there was just a faint tingling on the roof, then the sound of the rain became louder and louder.

She lit a cigar, put it in the ashtray, and looked out onto the open part of the terrace, where the rain eventually became so

heavy that the sorceresses danced on the wood.

She liked the smell of cigars, it was the smell of her father, of her childhood's carefree existence. Her father hadn't really smoked, but he used - on special occasions - to light a cigar that he rolled between his fingers, barely putting it in his mouth, just filling the room with the scent.

– "It smells like a big man here," he used to say with his deep, good laugh. There was nothing bad in the world when he laughed.

So she lit her cigar, because life could be so carefree, so unbearably easy, like when she was a child, like now, right now in this moment, in the middle of the sound of the rain, the sound of life, with a newborn, shapely child for whom "the sun will be shining".

She had never found a word to describe the feeling, the state she had found herself in that night. Happiness was exhausted, happy was too weak, ecstasy too charged. The word did not exist. Until one Saturday, when she read Dagbladet's Saturday magazine, where the successful Petter Schjerven from Typisk norsk was interviewed. Naturally, he was asked what his favorite word was.

"Fjørsilkebris," he said. And there it was. Feather, silk, breeze. His definition of the word's meaning was the feeling he got when he took the second sip of lager number two on a Friday after work. She understood what he meant, but thought that the experience was too small to deserve such a beautiful word, such a big feeling of vibrant, vital presence in their own lives.

So when life wasn't in balance, she sought out the terrace.

She hid the wine from Aksel. She had become a master at hiding it, because she knew he would react to her drinking on normal weekdays.

For example, she always bought two cartons of the same wine, hiding one in the cupboard and putting the other in its usual place in the kitchen. When the weekend approached and the wine box started to get empty, she replaced it with a new, full one.

Am I unhappy? No, she couldn't tell. But she wasn't happy. Not happy and not unhappy.

So ... what did she feel when she stood there, on the spot? "Breaking news", the highlight among television news lists, the murmur that went through the gathering of news list colleagues and politicians when they realized what it was about. Wasn't that a kind of happiness? No, it was not. It was a short-lived joy, a pleasure. But the rest of the time? The rest of her life? Just inside

the patio door she had placed a large wooden chest. It was from India. She had inherited it from her father. He had had an uncle who was in foreign trade, and had received it from him in his youth. She remembered that it had been in the dark attic when she was a child. Her mother had thought it was too big, flashy and weird, so it was left there.

It was the only thing she had from her father.

In the richly carved chest, with its lion heads, snakes and elephants, she had a sheepskin, a wool plaid and a mink coat that her mother had discarded.

– "You don't sit on the terrace in ten degrees below zero," said Aksel.

But Kajsa did, put the sheepskin in the chair, put on the coat and draped the wool blanket around her legs.

When they moved into the house, the terrace was ten square meters, now it was fifty, and about half of it was covered. Aksel thought it was big enough as it was, but she had insisted on extending it and building a roof over it. In order to make it as big as she wanted it to be, it had to be founded on piles over the slope towards the edge of the plot.

From the terrace, she had a view of the entire Oslofjord, from Oslo to Håøya. It was a long way to the sea, and below them were many other houses. But from the terrace she could only see the sea, the sky and the other side of the fjord. And there was no one who could see her.

She loved the close experience of the changes in nature; she could feel the changing air of the seasons against her skin, the coolness of the summer night, the biting cold of winter.

She wanted harsh winters with lots of snow. Sitting under the roof of the terrace when the snow fell, watching the snowflakes dancing through the air, catching the light and laying down layer upon layer, cold and white on the part of the terrace that was not covered.

But she liked it best on the terrace when it rained. She loved the spring rain, the very first rain when it was no longer winter. It made her happy in a strangely delightful and inexplicable way, she thought it was because the sound of rising water was the sound of life.

– Kajsa? The boss looked at her. - Are you in?

– What? Oh yes, sorry, what did you say?

– Can you get Jon Berg on the next show?

– Yes, I have made an appointment with him.

He looked at everyone around the table, "And anyone who gets anything new from their sources should let Kajsa know so that she can include it in the extras, unless it's something exclusive that we can run on the main broadcast tonight.

4

He sat there all day and watched what was happening in Parliament. At first it annoyed him, because now he had to change the plans. He wanted what he was doing to hit the front pages of the newspapers, taking all the attention away from everything else happening in the kingdom. He was going to set the agenda, everyone was going to know about it, everyone was going to talk about it, at breakfast, during lunch breaks at work. But now all the journalists were running around the corridors of the Storting while the desks in all the editorial offices were crying out for big headlines, for exclusivity. He knew how it worked. But then he thought that it didn't really matter. "It will take time before I'm done, but I intend to let them feel, really feel, with skin and hair, in every nerve cell in their bodies what it's like to be lost, feel the smell of their own rotten breath, feel how their bodies and minds disintegrate when they are completely without hope.

He studied Kajsa Coren's face. This was the kind of woman he should have had; a gorgeous, feminine, skilled woman who was easy to show off. He deserved it; a woman he could bask in. When he looked into Kajsa Coren's eyes, he felt that she saw him.

He had noticed her many times before. She wasn't one of those self-absorbed television faces with a gaze that stopped in the camera lens because they were more concerned with how they looked and what they were going to say than communicating with the viewers. He noticed the direct, open gaze, the firm voice, the vivid facial expressions, the careful use of the hand to emphasize the importance of certain words, and he felt that she both saw him and spoke to him.

He walked over to the kitchen door and closed it so the old people wouldn't see him. He couldn't bear their stares.

He stood looking out of the window, across the fields. Suddenly a thought struck him. She, of all people, should be the journalist covering what he had come to do, he would give her a head start, she would go live, as she was doing at the Storting now, and tell them what had happened. That way, he could tie her to him without her even knowing it. He smiled.

In the next special broadcast at one o'clock, Kajsa interviewed Jon Berg. He appeared with her before speaking to any other

journalists - in return for her keeping her agreement not to reveal what she knew until her family had been contacted. He told her that the party leader was doing well, but that he remained in hospital for observation. She asked him several critical questions about whether the fierce power struggle Jonsrud had been in the middle of had been so stressful for him that it could have contributed to his illness. But, driven as he was, he didn't answer the question, saying only that the most important thing now was for his boss to make a full recovery.

After this broadcast, she finally got hold of her mother.

– Of course I'm going to take care of the kids and go to kindergarten and drink coffee, she said.

– I'm so sorry, but the way things are going today...

– Don' worry, Kajsa. I'll take care of it. It's just nice for me that someone needs me.

– But Thea will be sad because I'm not there.

– It's going so well. I'll take care of it. Don't worry about it, sweetheart. You've got me.

Kajsa breathed a sigh of relief.

I'm fine, everything is as it should be, I need to stop worrying. But something was wrong. She had suspected it for a while. There were little signs that she hadn't paid attention to at first, just thought it was natural for her mother to become forgetful, to forget where she put things, to look for the coffee can in the wrong cupboard, to not find her car keys. But one day she came to visit with her lipstick outside the form of her lips. It was unlike her, completely abnormal.

Next month, her mother would be 74 years old. She was the liveliest and best-looking old lady Kajsa knew; always well-dressed, loved expensive clothes, expensive jewelry - and makeup, she never left home without her red-orange lipstick.

When she was little, she had been a little embarrassed by her mother's lipstick. In the small coastal village in Western Norway, where Kajsa had lived until she was ten, no other mothers wore lipstick. But her mother didn't even go to the store without lipstick. The other kids had teased Kajsa for having such a "yuppie" mom, and as she got older, she realized it was something the kids had heard from their mothers. They said that it was only the town wives in Ålesund - the ones who sat and chatted at the Tilje café down on the quay, where people from the islands sat and waited for the ferry - who wore red lipstick.

But her mother didn't care. It was only when the other women at a women's association meeting told her quite directly that her skirts were obscenely short that she became angry. But her father

had comforted her: "They're just jealous because you have such great legs," he had said, wrapping his arms around her and lifting her up onto the kitchen floor. "And so sexy," he had whispered, looking deep into her eyes. Kajsa had looked at them, she was so happy when they seemed to play with each other and seemed so happy.

"Sexy?" she had asked.

Her mother and father had stood there holding each other, looking at her in surprise before bursting into laughter.

They had had it. Proximity.

They asked what he wanted, why he had come. He answered truthfully that he had come to restore balance. They asked stupid questions: Who are you, what have we done to you?

That's what they asked! What had they done to him?

His immediate impulse was to explain, but he didn't do it. He didn't owe them that, he didn't owe them anything, absolutely nothing. He didn't want to have any relationship with them, as he would if he started explaining and talking to them, as if he needed to justify himself! So he said nothing, did not answer them. In the end, they gave up asking.

When he took out the syringes, they were just as scared as he had imagined. He himself had only tried it once. It was a near-death experience. He was lifted out of the room and saw his own body lying lifeless on the sofa, his brain was freed from his senses, because it seemed perfect, and everything he had experienced before became a reality, a new reality, something he was reliving, not just thinking about, not just painful memories, but something he was experiencing again, for real. The experience was so painful that he had to miss work for several days, and still, many years later, the experience came back to him - especially at night - and evoked horrific images, even as he lay awake. He wondered if Frans Widerberg had tried it, because his paintings of floating figures freed from gravity and floating in an atmosphere of psychedelic colors were an almost perfect reproduction of what he had experienced. Many people seemed to think that Widerberg's paintings were beautiful; he thought they were grotesque, the ugliest thing he could imagine.

The worst thing was that the experience had led to the rage, which he tried to control all the time, becoming greater. The memories became more painful, the nights harder to get through. If he hadn't had something to focus on, something important to accomplish every day, a goal in life, it would have been unbearable.

He took the equipment out of his bag. "I'm now going to give you the worst - or best - experience you'll ever have in your life. He smiled at the choice of words; in life. Yes, it was the right wording, because they no longer had time to experience anything other than this.

He laid the equipment out on the table. "Have you heard of Timothy Leary?" he asked. I could tell you a lot about Leary; his humor, his intelligence, his eloquence, his commitment. His life was like a movie - a strange twist. Nixon ... you've heard of him, right? He even called Leary the fatherliest man in America.

– Leary was one of the gurus in the hippie community, where the use of marijuana and LSD was a protest against guns, against young American men being sent off to wars that made no sense to them.

He heard that he had brought out his teaching voice and acted as if it was a lecture. He thought that they probably didn't understand much of what he was saying, but that wasn't important. The important thing was that he was talking, just him, he was in control, he was in charge. He liked the sound of his own voice; deep and calm.

He smiled kindly at them.

– Timothy Leary was a psychology professor at Harvard, but was ostracized when he used students in his experiments with LSD. He believed that it amplified certain sensory impressions, especially erotic experiences.
He smiled again and continued: "But Leary also experimented with many different substances that he claimed could increase users' understanding of their own psyche. And that is what you will now have the opportunity to try.

He pointed to the woman's head, "I wonder what's going on deep down there?" She looked at him with frightened eyes.

- You're going to experience "turned on, tuned in and dropped out!" Leary's most famous slogan. But the real reason I'm telling you about Leary is his relationship with death. You should think about death, you who are so old. Hm? But maybe you do? He smiled at them.

– In the last few months before he died, Leary wrote a book called Design for Dying. *"The most important thing you do in your life is to die," Leary claimed, and on his deathbed he said: "Why not?" to his son Zachary. He uttered the phrase, and died shortly thereafter. His last words, according to Zach Leary, were "Beautiful!".*

- Isn't it good to think that death can be beautiful? After Leary died, seven grams of his ashes were sent into space. Imagine that! Wouldn't that be something? But unfortunately I can't fix that. He held one of the syringes up to the light, sprayed out a few drops and checked that there was no air left in the needle.

5

Two days after Jonsrud fell ill, Kajsa received a call just as she was on her way out the door with the children.

- Kajsa, where are you? It was the security manager, Ellen. She sounded stressed.

Kajsa put the phone against her shoulder as she pushed the children in front of her and locked the door with her arms full of bags and sacks.

– On my way to work, she replied.

– How far have you come?

– Must bring the kids to school and kindergarten," she said.

– Good! You need to check a case in Asker.

– Here?

– Yes.

Ellen explained that a tipster had called. He had heard a conversation on the police radio. A "hysterical woman", as they put it, had called and had barely been able to account for anything other than the address. One of the patrols in Asker had been called and asked to visit the address to find out what had happened. This was what the tipster had heard on the police radio, and Kajsa was given the road name and number. "It's not that far from where you live?" asked the duty manager.

– Yes ... But do you know where I live?

– No, but the tipster said it was near you, that it would only take you five minutes to get there.

Kajsa knew exactly where it was. It was an address she had looked up in the phone book just a few weeks ago to find out who lived there. Out of sheer curiosity.

She and Hanne, a friend from the neighborhood, had gone skiing together in the field. But on the way back, they had taken a turn onto a trail they hadn't taken before, thinking it might be in the direction of where they had parked the car. It wasn't, and in the end they hadn't known where they were. They had figured out that the only thing they could do was to walk up a ridge and look out to get their bearings. That's when they had come to the house that Kajsa was now on her way to. They had run slowly down a small valley, through dense forest and come to a gate. On the other side, on an open plain, was a farm. The trail went in a different direction, but she and Hanne had noticed that the house wasn't far from the road, and now they were in a hurry to get to the car before it got dark.

The farm was dilapidated and looked abandoned. Nevertheless, they had both stopped at the gate, looking uncertainly at the house, a barn, a stable and some outbuildings. Kajsa had a feeling that they were moving into forbidden territory, they had to go just past the stairs, because on the other side was an icy pond. She and Hanne looked at each other, and Hanne seemed to be thinking the same thing, that it felt strange to walk right up to the house. As if they were doing something illegal.

– "Let's go, we have to cross that yard if we're going to make it home before someone starts a search operation," Hanne had said.

They had walked slowly across the courtyard, between the house and the pond, without a word, while curiously looking at the window with the kitchen curtains. It wasn't until they got close that they saw the light from a ceiling lamp. So there were people living here after all.

– "Did you notice that?" asked Hanne when they had come through the gate on the other side and onto a narrow road.

– What is it?

– Didn't you see the movement in the curtain?

– Yuck, it was just your imagination.

– No, it wasn't, said Hanne. Someone didn't like us walking past. I felt it in my bones.

– You don't know that, said Kajsa.

- Yes, it was disgusting. There was something creepy about the whole place. And did you see that pond? The pond of the dead, I thought. Just admit it, there was something creepy about that place.

Kajsa laughed - Aren't you going too far now? But she'd had the same uncomfortable feeling of presence.

Kajsa had thought that she should go there again, on a sunny day. Maybe it would be idyllic there then.

She took off on a bumpy gravel road into the field. It became more slippery between the houses. There were snow banks on both sides of the road, but the snow had melted from the trees. It had been raining for the last few days, but now the sun was shining low over the landscape, coloring it golden.

After a while, the road and she turned left, drove a good distance with tall trees and bushes on both sides, then she arrived at the gate she and her friend had gone through after passing the house.

Kajsa parked her car on the side of the road and walked into the yard. There was a police car parked right in front of the stairs. Hesitantly, she walked towards the house. Suddenly, a policeman leaned forward out the door, leaned against the hood of the police car and vomited.

She walked slowly towards him. He looked at her, wiping the mucus from his mouth. He was young, she registered the two stripes on his shoulder pads, Roman numeral two. A second-year police student, a rookie. - Breathe in, she said. - Is it that bad in there?

– "It's the worst thing I've ever seen in my entire life," he said.

Maybe it was the way she spoke to him, or maybe he was too dazed to think, but he seemed to think she was in the police. She would let him believe it a little while longer.

– How bad? she asked.

– Whoever has done this must be completely insane," he replied.

– Dead?

– He

nodded.

– Both of them? she asked.

– Yes, he harked.

The two old people who lived here, she thought. She knew that after checking the address in the phone book. She even remembered their names: Alfhild and Jørgen Godø.

– What was wrong with them? she asked.

– The way they ... he swallowed hard, trying not to throw up again, ... the way they ... he said. Then he cringed and vomited again.

At the same time, another policeman walked through the door, also pale, but still considerably more composed, older and experienced.

– What are you doing here? he asked.

Kajsa knew him and had met him at work before.

– A tip, she replied, meeting the gaze of the man who was vomiting. She could read his mind: She's a journalist, now I've made a fool of myself.

– You ... you have nothing to do here. Get the hell out of here!

– What happened? she asked tartly.

Not long after Kajsa had lined up outside the gate to which she had been directed and pulled out her cell phone to take pictures to send to K4, Channel 4's online newspaper, the whole cavalry came up the road. She caught a glimpse of Chief Constable Karsten Kjølås in one of the cars. She snapped as he passed. He just looked straight ahead.

Kajsa had previously worked as a crime journalist, but asked to be transferred to the political department when she increasingly found herself in a conflict of loyalty with Aksel. Sometimes she and her husband worked on the same cases; she as a crime journalist, he as a police psychiatrist. It was he who had issued the ultimatum: Either she would quit, or he had to. Reluctantly, she realized that he was right, and there was only one answer: She could work in many fields of journalism; he was specially trained in his. He could, of course, stop taking assignments for the police, but she knew how much it meant to him, he was plowing unplowed ground in Norway. She had given up, but it cost her more than she had told him.

Aksel first became known to the Norwegian public when he conducted a research project on the subject: "Why does dad kill mom?" It received widespread media coverage, particularly because one of his findings was that in some cases the mother had

psychologically terrorized the father for years, until he tipped over. Aksel argued that these killers should also be seen as victims. He was asking for trouble. Women's activists, other researchers, and not least women on the far left wing of politics, especially one of the young women from SV who sat on the justice committee, went into overdrive in their attacks on Aksel, labeling him as a frivolous researcher who delivered tailor-made one-liners, designed to get him attention in the press. The debate raged for several days, and eventually the Minister of Justice got active. "Researcher tramples on murder victims," VG wrote in bold type on the front page.

However, Aksel's expertise was credited, as he had been appointed as a psychiatric expert in several major cases. Eventually, he was also used as a commentator in various criminal cases. With simple formulations about complicated contexts, an ability to be pointed and a lack of respect for politicians and other authorities, he also became a popular debater.

– You've become a celebrity, Kajsa had teased him. Aksel had an aversion to celebrities.

– I'm not a celebrity, I'm a qualified opinion leader in the public sphere, he replied with a wry smile.

– And what's the difference? she had replied teasingly.

Gradually, his interest had shifted more in the direction of after-research, particularly the profiling of criminals. He was fascinated by the Americans' ability to describe a completely unknown perpetrator, in some cases down to the level of detail, based solely on the researchers' findings. Almost five years ago, while pregnant with Thea, Aksel had attended a six-month course in criminal profiling with lecturers considered to be the best in the world at the FBI's headquarters in Quantico, Virginia, USA.

He still ran his own practice in Oslo, but spent more and more time working for the police, in addition to some research work and teaching at the university. It irritated the hell out of him that he was often used only when the police were completely stuck. In several cases, he claimed that he could easily have profiled the killer or rapist so that the criminal could have been apprehended earlier, and in some cases his contribution could have prevented further crimes. You could say what you like about Aksel Coren, but at least he had self-confidence, Kajsa thought.

Kajsa stood hanging over the gate, thinking it would not look good if Aksel showed up here. She couldn't jump off the case. This was her story, as long as she could convey the first impression and the information that the poor police trainee had revealed to her.

When she called the duty manager and asked him to send a photographer and another reporter, and wanted to discuss whether they should do a special broadcast, she remembered that the family's video camera was in the car. She retrieved it and photographed what was to give Channel 4 a huge advantage over others in its coverage of this tragedy. She got shots of the house and the other buildings, the frozen pond, the forensic officers dressed in boiler suits and finally the policeman who came towards her with a roll of police tape in his hand and told her to pull further down the road. Barricades were set up around the entire farm with police guards positioned in such a way that it would be impossible to get a single picture of what was happening in the yard where the police were. In addition, the airspace over Asker was closed to prevent the press from using helicopters. The only thing the photographers would be able to see through the lens was the forest. But I already have you on tape, she thought triumphantly.

An hour later, the SNG truck, which made it possible to broadcast live, was in place. In addition, a journalist from the crime department and a photographer arrived. She let them hold the fort at the cordon in case, against all odds, the investigative team decided to make an announcement.

The recording she had made was sent over to the producer in the studio. They agreed to put the images on Kajsa's live report, alternating between Kajsa in a small image in one corner and in full screen format.

She stood up by the barrier tape, put on some lipstick and ran her hand through her hair. She got a countdown on her earphones at the same time as the photographer used his fingers to count down. Three, two, one.

- Just over an hour ago, police arrived at this farm in Asker. According to Channel 4, an elderly couple was found murdered inside the house early this morning. It was reportedly a neighbor who entered the house and found a man and a woman dead. The police have not yet released any information about the murders and the circumstances surrounding them. However, according to

Channel 4, the murders were carried out in a particularly bestial manner.

It was a coincidence that he was there when the woman entered the house. He still had a few days left of his vacation and couldn't stay away. He had been standing in the woods and had seen her come out, staggering, shortly afterwards. When she pulled out her cell phone and called, he had run back to the car and driven home. On the way, he had stopped and borrowed the phone from a gas station. Just to be on the safe side.

It would have been easy. All he had to do was call Channel 4's tip line and say: "Hi, it's Birger, I have a hot tip.

He turned on the TV and waited. He began to think it was taking a long time, as the text scrolled across the top of the screen. "Coming soon: Special broadcast," it read. "Double murder in Asker." Finally! He was so excited that his heart jumped and bounced between his throat and stomach. He took a sip of coffee as Kajsa's face appeared on the screen. He nodded happily. He had given her first dibs. She should only have known that he had done it for her! He met her gaze and felt the connection between them. He was extra happy when he saw that she had been there so early that she had gotten pictures of the investigators arriving. That's the girl doing her job! He also noted that she used the word «bestial» about the murders and wondered how she could know. That woman was unbelievable! She was above and beyond any other journalist in the country.

After Kajsa had submitted her direct report, she walked around the neighborhood. She wondered where the woman who had reported the murder might live. The nearest house was about a hundred meters down the road. Sitting on the stairs was a man, she would estimate him to be in his forties.

– Hi, she said tentatively and walked towards him.

The man didn't answer, just looked at her. He acted strangely, there was something indifferent in the way he looked at her.

– Can I have a few words with you? she asked.

– Why? he said.

The question was rude, but there was nothing rude or hostile in his tone.

– No, I'm just wondering if you know what happened.

– I don't want to talk that, he said.

She had come right up to him now. There was something in his facial expression, something childish. It was then that she realized that something was wrong with him. At first glance, he looked

perfectly normal, but he had to be mentally handicapped. He had blond, short-cropped hair. His face was round, with a large mouth, a pointed nose and a strong chin. But his eyes were as innocent as a child's.

– Are you home alone? she asked.

– No, mom is at home.

At the same time, a woman with a walker appeared in the doorway.

– Who are you talking to then, Njål, she said, looking at Kajsa. Kajsa walked up and held out her hand. - Hi, Kajsa Coren, I ...

She didn't have time to say anything else. No, but I've seen you on TV, the woman said, shaking her hand. Birte Kristiansen, she said. This is Njål. What brings you here?

- I was wondering if you know anything about what happened up there, said Kajsa.

– Has something happened? Here?

– Lots of police, said Njål.

– Police? Why is that, then?

– They're dead, said Njål, very dead.

– How do you know that? Kajsa looked at Njål in surprise, but he just looked past her without answering.

– Have you watched TV? she asked.

– No, he replied without looking at her.

– Who is dead? asked Mrs. Kristiansen.

– The couple up the road.

– Alfhild and Jørgen? She looked at Kajsa, speechless. - Dead? How?

– I think they've been murdered, Kajsa said carefully.

– You've got to be kidding me! The woman looked like she was about to fall and Kajsa hurried to take her by the arm. She was small and thin, no more than about six feet tall, like a little sparrow. She had silver hair, her face was small, her eyes were large, light gray, pale with a darker ring around them, like old people's eyes.

– Can we go in and sit down, maybe? said Kajsa.

The woman stumbled into the hallway and into the kitchen. She struck out with her hand towards a kitchen chair.

– Did you know them? Kajsa asked and sat down.

– No... Not very well.

– But you know who they are?

– Yes ...

– When the last time you spoke to them?

– It's been a long time ...

– Many days?

– Days? No... many years.

– Many years!

– Yes.

– How many then? Two?

The woman shook her

head.

– Five? She was still shaking her head. - Ten? It can't have been that long since you spoke to them, can it?

– Ten years? said the woman. No, let's see. Njål is forty-two. They moved here in the fifties, nineteen-fifty-eight-fifty-nine, maybe. The last time I talked to them was when Njål was quite young.

Kajsa looked at her in disbelief, You haven't spoken to them in ... almost forty years?

– No ...

– Why haven't you talked to them?

– ... why? The woman looked as if she didn't quite know how to answer.

– Yes, isn't it unusual that you, as the closest neighbor, haven't spoken to them for decades?

– No ... Yes ... She fell for it. - But they were never interested in contact. It was a ... No, it's so long ago now.

– What is? asked Kajsa.

– No, nothing ... But Njål has probably talked to them.

– Njål?

– Yes, he talks to everyone, and he loves the fields so much that he sometimes walks through the fields, well, across their yard, that is. But not very often.

Kajsa sat and talked to Birte Kristiansen for quite a while, but she didn't get to know much about the couple. She tried to get more out of her, but either she didn't want to talk or she didn't have anything to say. Kajsa nevertheless asked her if she would like to be interviewed. But Birte Kristiansen just shook her head.

– I don't want anything to do with this, she said firmly. Kajsa asked her if she could imagine who the woman who reported the murder was. Mrs. Kristiansen thought that not many

people in the neighborhood used the path across their yard.

– But you can try Therese, in the first house when you turn off the road. Therese Joggedame, as I call her. She's just moved in and is jogging around everywhere. Can you understand why someone would run around in the woods like that? Isn't it enough to go for a walk?

Njål was still sitting on the stairs when Kajsa left.

– Did you often talk to Alfhild and Jørgen? she asked.

– Sometimes, yes.

– Were they nice?

– No.

– How did you know they were dead?

But Njål just looked past her, he chewed hard on his thumb, wriggled uneasily, didn't answer.

She rang the doorbell of the house where she had understood that this Therese lived. Only after three rings was the door gently opened ajar.

– Are you from the police? the woman asked.

– Did you find them? she asked without answering the question, hoping the woman wasn't an avid viewer of NYPD Blue, where the police officers always held up their ID badges before asking anything. She quickly dismissed the idea that she should show her press card.

– Yes, the woman whispered.

– What happened?

– I use to jog in the area here with the dog, and often look after the farm up there.

– On the path that runs across the courtyard, between the gates?

– Yes, exactly ... and then ... Well, the last couple of days I've wondered why it's been so quiet there.

– Have you meet the couple who live there?

– No, but they have two dogs, they're always outside. Actually, I'm a bit reluctant to take that path, because the dogs always makes such a racket when I bring Tassopp. Yes, my dog, that is," she added, as if there was a need to explain. "It's so nice in the woods on the other side, and they used to be attached to a running string. Well, then ... yes, for the past few days I haven't seen the dogs, nor heard the sound of them, so today I knocked

on the door. They were two old people, something might have happened to them. The woman bit her lip - and it had. When no one answered, I went in and ...

Just then, a police car drove up at full speed and stopped in front of the house. A policeman jumped out of the car: Hey, Coren, you can stop snooping around now.

– I can talk to whoever I want, Kajsa replied sourly.

But she did feel a little guilty when she saw the perplexed expression of the woman in the doorway.

– Not here, said the policeman just as acidly and pushed the woman inside.

It was a long day. It was not until four o'clock in the afternoon that the police called a press conference. The head of the investigation, Chief Inspector Karsten Kjølås, said that the two people killed were the married couple Alfhild and Jørgen Godø. He would not say anything about how they were killed. He asked the public for help and announced a tip line number.

At this point, Kajsa had already been reporting three times directly from the farm, and none of what emerged was new to her. But she hadn't used the names of the couple while waiting for it to be officially confirmed.

In her report for the main broadcast, she used what she had experienced that day for all it was worth. She established that this was a case of two gruesome murders. She gave a vivid description of the scene with the exclusive pictures she had taken with her own video camera. She also told that a neighbor, who reacted to the fact that she hadn't seen the couple's dogs for several days, had found them.

Convincing anyone in the neighborhood to be interviewed had been an impossible task - until she came to the nearest RIMI store. It turned out that the store delivered goods to the couple's door once a week, and the store manager was more than happy to be interviewed. Perhaps he thought that "all advertising is good advertising". He certainly seemed to think so, because during the interview he had seemed to have trouble not smiling, one corner of his mouth kept twitching, and in the end Kajsa had had to ask him to "perhaps put his face in a more serious position, considering the circumstances".

Just before she was due to leave the house by the pond at 3 p.m. to make the press conference, Aksel had turned up.

– What are you doing here? he asked in surprise.

Why doesn't he give me a kiss instead, she thought, but replied: - I am working.

– But you promised...

– Yes, Aksel, I know, it's just today. Crisis management. And you, I'm working until nine o'clock, I hope the kids are okay. I have to run now, she said before he could respond.

It was almost eleven o'clock before she got home. She heard voices from Aksel's office and knocked on the door.

– Hello!

It was Kjell Lauritzen who was visiting.

Kjell was an old friend of Aksel's, and they had kept in touch ever since their student days. Kjell now worked as a psychiatrist in Dikemark. He was recently divorced, but Aksel, Kajsa, Kjell and his ex-wife Tina had previously spent a lot of time together. They had children of the same age, and for many years they had rented a cabin in southern Norway every summer. Kajsa was still seeing Tina, but the intervals had become longer and longer. Aksel and Kjell, on the other hand, had a lot of contact, not least because they had worked together as expert witnesses in several major court cases. And when Aksel worked on profiling for the police, he sometimes used Kjell as a kind of sparring partner.

– Hi, Kjell, so nice to see you.

Kjell stood up and gave Kajsa a hug. Kjell was a hugger.

Aksel barely looked at her, he was engrossed in his computer.

- "I won't disturb you," she said and went out onto the terrace.

She was exhausted but excited at the same time, her thoughts churning about what had happened that day. She filled a coffee cup with wine. A coffee cup was far less revealing if Aksel or one of the children were to come and check on her. The wine tingled gently on the palate, and she felt her shoulders slump.

What was the policeman who threw up about to say? The way they were ... he had said. What did he mean by that? What had happened to them? The police still hadn't given any details about how the murders had been carried out. Probably something they were withholding "for the sake of the investigation", as they had put it, meaning it was something only the killer could know. Had he left a so-called "signature"?

The other big question she pondered was: How could someone be out of touch with their neighbors for forty years?

Was it possible? Was there any particular reason for it? Had something happened that could explain it? Or did they have a reason to keep to themselves, did they have something to hide?

There were a lot of questions, and Kajsa couldn't find any logical answers to any of them. The old crime journalist in her was triggered by this case; she really wanted to work on this. But she couldn't. I can't risk my marriage for a couple of murders, she thought sourly.

He had been sure that things would get better. But they didn't. The first night he was back home in his own bed, he woke up crying. His body was wet with sweat, his heart was beating hard and fast, and even though he couldn't always remember what he had dreamt or why he was crying, because it could be so many things, his body ached from the pain that had been in the dream, and it stayed with him all day, lying like a heavy stone in his stomach and pressed him to the ground so that everything he did was only with great effort.

But that was nothing compared to waking up to his own screams. It was always the same event, the one that had crushed him and stuck so strongly in his soul that he kept reliving it, not as in a dream, but for real, he never finished experiencing it. It was as real as the time it happened.

The screams were the same now as then; his voice became childlike, like the howl of a puppy. Now, as an adult, he understood that he had had a breakdown. It was then that hatred had taken hold of him, and from then on it overshadowed all other feelings he had had. Because he had once been an ordinary child.

He had been twelve years old when it happened. The very worst.

For as long as he had been alive, he had tried to be invisible. He had been very good at it when he was little, both at home and at the orphanage, but it became more and more difficult as he grew older, the anxiety he had in his body grew over the years.

He was sent to a school home this summer. It was located in the middle of a large forest. He loved the forest, and he was allowed to run around on his own, because physical education was a priority for the director.

"The body is the temple of the soul," he said, nodding in approval.

He never felt as alive and strong as when he was running.

It had started so well when he arrived. The manager had welcomed him by saying that he would meet him with love. God's love. "I understand God's purpose for you. He will send you help and give you the strength to . You will find new strength every day, you will see things more clearly here with me, you will see that the trials you have been subjected to have been sent to you to make you submit, for God cannot use hard cases until they have learned to bend. You must not be defiant, and your heart must not be filled with hatred

and revenge. So come to me, as to your best friend, and I will love you as my own child." The words had hit him like warm currents, making him feel relieved. He would gain strength. All would be well. The meaningless would be gone.

The day the hate came to him started so well, he had thought it was the best day ever. It was his birthday. All the boys worked hard on a farm near the school home. In the middle of the day, the farm wife fed them in the kitchen. One of the boys told her it was his birthday. At the end of the day, when they were leaving, she gave him a fiver. He had thought jubilantly: I'm rich! It was the first time he had his own money, and he fantasized about everything he could buy with it. It bubbled in an unknown way in his chest. But someone, probably one of the boys who was jealous of him, revealed it to the manager, who suddenly stood in front of him with his arm outstretched. - Give me the money, he said. He didn't want to, it wasn't fair, he refused, it was his birthday, it was his, he was rich. But the manager took the five from him by force, forced his fist out of his trouser pocket, pushed his fingers apart.

He couldn't hold back, he was so disappointed, it hurt so much, the contrast between the joy of being rich one moment and being robbed of this wealth in the space of a few seconds was so great that he felt completely black inside. It was just a whisper, as if he was talking to himself, but the manager heard him. He snapped his fingers and someone pounced on him, tore off his trousers and threw him to the floor. Strong, adult hands held his legs. Then he felt the first stinging pain of the whip across his back and ass, the pain came again and again, worse and worse with each blow. He gritted his teeth. He couldn't cry, he couldn't let them see him cry.

He was then pulled to his feet and stood naked in front of the manager, who held the whip in his hand.

– Come here and apologize! he commanded.

For a brief second he thought there was no way around it, he had no choice, he had to apologize. But then he saw the welcoming, forgivingly caring smile of the manager, and a chill ran through him. No, he had nothing to apologize for, he said. He tried to smile scornfully, but his back hurt so much that he trembled, he felt dizzy as he was going to faint, it was just an anguished grimace. How long had they been beating him, how many blows had he received? He didn't know, he just knew that the pain would never go away.

He was locked in a room in the basement. He lay ashamed on the icy concrete floor. He tried to hold on to the idea that no one - no one - would get to him, that he was strong, that he could withstand anything. But it didn't work. Now that he was alone, he could allow himself to cry. But the crying dragged the pain into his body, it tore and tore at all his limbs, it was unbearable, and he couldn't help crying out. He shouted for his mother, he

shouted for the manager, he shouted for Jesus. From time to time, there was just this cry that reminded him of the howling of a puppy.

He didn't know how long he had been there, how many hours or days, but suddenly the manager stood in the doorway. He crawled on all fours and threw himself around his legs, and kneeling with his face against the manager's thighs, he clung on, long since out of tears, long since out of everything.

The manager bent down, stroked his hair and said: "God can't use hardhats. That's why it took such a terribly hard cure. But even now, while you are in God's hard school, he will send you help and comfort - he will give you to love me. But you must not be defiant toward God or harbor hatred and revenge in your heart. It will destroy God's work with you. I receive you today as one of Jesus' little lost lambs to be smoked and cared for, while telling you that I will spend both time and love on you - and chastisement if necessary. Then I give you full and complete forgiveness for what you have done.

The manager unbuttoned his pants and pulled his head towards him.

6

The day after Kajsa covered the double murder, she received a letter. It was on the mail shelf at work and was typewritten: "*You are very good.*" At the bottom of the sheet it said: "*P.S. How did you know the murder was bestial?*" No signature. Kajsa looked at the convoy lute, just her name, no address, no stamp. From time to time, she received letters of admiration in which the sender went much further in describing his admiration, not to mention his fantasies, than the sender of this letter.

fat did.

"How did you know the murder was bestial?" The sentence plagued her. "An observant viewer could of course have had such thoughts, but still ... It was a bit like 'between you and me, me and you know something'.

She went down to the reception. None of the people sitting there knew about the letter. She went into the office of the reception manager, Jorunn, and explained that she had received a letter and that it was important to find out who had delivered it. She promised to contact those who had been at work over the past 24 hours, including the night watchman from Securitas.

Kajsa had an appointment with Jakob Sperre, the man who had called her about the orphanage investigation. She took a taxi to the address he had given her.

It was in Bergen that it all began. Former children from the home had come forward in the newspaper Bergens Tidende and told of cruel abuse at Bergen's Garnes boys' home. They for-

spoke of a life where they had grown up almost isolated from the outside world, and many gave detailed accounts of physical and sexual abuse that made more than just the Bergeners choke on their coffee.

Recently, Save the Losers had received calls from women and men from all over the country. The newspapers were full of harrowing stories about people who had lost their childhood due to abuse. It was hard to imagine that such things could have happened on such a large scale in a civilized society like Norway. They demanded a national investigation, but most of all they wanted to be believed. Several of them had tried for years to get attention without anyone caring. Some had also applied for fairness compensation, but had been rejected on the grounds that the cases were time-barred.

It wasn't until the media coverage literally exploded that the politicians in Parliament woke up - despite the fact that several of the orphanage children had sent them many letters over the years. Now the members of parliament were almost competing to use the strongest words to characterize what these children had been exposed to. The Minister of State was also quick to express her "shock at the abuse that had been uncovered" and called it "the worst thing the authorities and the public apparatus have done to young children", followed by the promise that "the government would of course take a closer look at the fate of these children". The minister spoke of how shocked he was by the revelations, as if he had never heard of the case before. However, Kajsa had produced several articles on the subject, and three of the orphanage children had given her copies of letters they had sent to both the minister and other named politicians in Parliament. Kajsa had confronted them with the letters, with the camera rolling during interviews in which they all stood up willingly and told her how outrageous they thought it was. She had let them talk warmly about their commitment to these poor people, before presenting copies of the letters they had received towards the end of the interviews. Then they fell silent. Their evasiveness was revealed.

The same thing happened when she interviewed the minister. She took just a little longer to show him the letters he had received - both when he was a member of parliament and now as a cabinet minister. It was a very emotional minister who also dared to show how strongly this issue affected him. Kajsa asked him questions about what he was feeling, what he was thinking - after all, he had young children of his own. What did he think about - not just the lack of love, food and clothing - but being small and afraid every night of being raped?

At this point in the interview, the minister's tears came to the surface. Kajsa let him , sat quietly and waited while he swallowed and looked away, then she calmly placed copies of reply letters he had sent to children in orphanages on the table between them and asked: "But when you are so strongly affected by this now, why didn't you let yourself be affected before? Because you've known about this for many years, haven't you? The minister stared at the table, opened his mouth and closed it again.

It was not a good case from the minister's point of view. The only consolation had to be that there were many opposition politicians who came out just as badly and who therefore could not go cabinet hunting without being accused of double standards.

Kajsa had been on several reporting trips and interviewed children in orphanages over the past six months. Virtually everyone she met had suffered the same fate later in life, no matter where in the country they lived. They had had great difficulty getting an education, finding a job and having a normal family life. She divided them into four main categories: Those lying in the cemetery, those who were revolving door patients in psychiatry, those who were welfare clients and a few who had managed reasonably well. She hadn't met anyone who didn't in one way or another have health or social problems that could be traced back to what they had experienced in their childhood, whether they had "just" gone constantly hungry throughout their childhood, or had been subjected to repeated severe mistreatment and/or sexual abuse.

That's why she had envisioned a completely different man than

him she met that day. Although the address was in Ullern in Oslo, she had expected him be characterized by his background in some external way.

Jakob Sperre was not. He was neither on disability benefits nor particularly infirm. Quite the opposite, in fact. He was a sturdy, tall man, brown-skinned, as if he had recently been to the South. His shirt was open and he had a discreet gold chain around his neck. She had imagined an older man, but Jakob Sperre could not be that many years older than herself. The apartment was in Hoffsjef Løvenskiolds vei in Ullern. Sperre led her a large living room with floor-to-ceiling windows, with a magnificent view of the city and far beyond the fjord. The table was already set with expensive-looking crockery - probably Rosenthal, Kajsa thought. In the middle of the glass table was a homemade cheesecake.

Who has baked? Does he have a wife? Kajsa looked around. The living room looked like a picture from an exclusive interior design catalog. She recognized Bjørn Wiinblad's characteristic handmade and hand-painted ceramics on the windowsill, a drawing by the same artist that was clearly original, signed by Wiinblad. But there were no family photos there, no plants, no clear traces of a woman's hand.

For almost two hours, Sperre talked about his childhood and growth. Two hours without Kajsa asking more than a handful of questions.

As a child, he had been taken care of by the police when he wandered around Oslo alone. To this day, he couldn't remember anything about it, apart from a police uniform and big hand holding his. He had later found out that he was taken care of by child welfare services.

– No one missed me, no one came forward, I still don't know where I come from. I don't know my name, I don't know when my birthday is, I don't know anything about my background," he said.

– How old were you?

– "I don't know either," he said, "probably four or five years.

– But then you must have been old enough to say your name, where you lived perhaps, and ...

He waved his hand and interrupted her. "They couldn't get a single word out of me for weeks. Maybe I didn't want to tell them, maybe I didn't want to be where I came from, maybe I had experienced something that made me or unwilling to speak. Maybe, maybe, maybe ... I don't know. I don't remember anything. My picture was printed in Aftenposten, but no one came forward, no one knew me. Don't you think I've pondered, tried to remember, wondered why no one recognized me. Where did I come from? Why didn't anyone miss me? Maybe they were happy to get rid of me? Was I a Tater? A gypsy?

He pointed to his upper lip - Hareskår. They tried to put me up for adoption, but nobody wanted me after seeing me. He was silent for a , then he added: - I was never a wanted child. He took a sip of coffee and looked away. Adam's apple went up and down a few times before he began "The story of an unwanted child", as he called it.

Jakob Sperre grew up in two orphanages and a couple of boys' homes and special schools. He stayed at the first orphanage until he was seven years old. What he remembers best was a cramped, dark closet under the stairs. That's where he was locked up when he had done something wrong. He could also vaguely remember a hand hitting him and that he had always been hungry. But the darkness under the stairs was what he remembered best.

Sperre was a good storyteller; he was articulate and found it easy to find words to describe and bring experiences and situations to life. Kajsa felt his story settle like a heavy pressure against her chest. She envisioned him; small, scared, under the stairs in the dark, all alone, unwanted.

– "I learned one thing," he continued, "I learned that there was only one way to survive.

– Kajsa's voice was just a whisper.

– To make oneself invisible, to do what those in power wanted,

Don't argue, just be quiet. So I became invisible, the one who was just there without anyone noticing.

He grew up without learning to read, write or do math. When he was seven years old and old enough to start school, he was sent to an orphanage on a large farm in Vestfold. Instead of going to school, the children had to work on the farm, and were even hired out to other farms as laborers.

But the worst happened when he was transferred to a children's home in Oslo.

Jakob Sperre was clearly having trouble getting on with the story now.

– "I haven't talked about it before," he said. "But I want to try, it's important that people like you know how it really was, I want you to know everything," he said. He sat quietly for a while, looking down. - Someone has to know, someone has to know the whole story, he said.

He thought he had gone to heaven when he got to Schwendsens gate, back to the city. For the first time, he experienced that someone cared about him; a young leisure leader.

– He made us laugh. He made me - the invisible one, the one no one saw, no one heard - laugh. It was almost as if I had to learn it, get used to the sound of my own laughter. It was completely alien to me, I couldn't remember hearing myself laugh so loudly and noisily until this leisure leader made me do it.

– What so special about him?

– He played with us, played soccer, joked, he made me feel seen, I was not invisible to him. I, who was Nobody, became Somebody. He took us on an overnight trip, with a tent, to one of the islands in the Oslofjord. I couldn't believe it, I was going on an excursion, I was so excited I didn't know where to go.

That's when it happened. The most painful of all, as Sperre called it.

– He said I was chosen. Me. Of all the others he could have chosen, the big, tough boys, he chose me, me with the harelip, to spend the night in his tent. Imagine, he liked little, invisible me. He was the first person who really cared about me.

Jakob interrupted himself. - I'm sorry, he said and went out. He returned with a dryer sheet from the kitchen. - I'm sorry, he repeated. Then he sort of started: - He abused me. His voice was gravelly. - The physical pain was unbearable. But it passed. "The pain here never did," he said, pressing his hand to his chest.

He sniffed and said: "It wasn't true that he cared about me after all. On the contrary. He only cared about himself. He destroyed me.

They sat quietly in separate chairs for a long time, until Kajsa said: "But you've made it, you've done well in life? She heard herself that it seemed like she was trying to comfort him, find something he could be happy about. It was just stupid.

– Yes, he said, barely audible. He cleared his throat. - Yes, he repeated more loudly. - I've done well, against all odds. And then we were moved to a boys' home. There were others who had to go through the same thing, especially another boy.

– What happened to him?

– The headmaster there was a real sadist, and he appointed one of the boys as his personal slave ... in every way, he said with emphasis on all.

– How so?

– I don't think I can tell you about him ... It was ... terrible ... The director had a room in the basement, I don't need to say more, you can imagine the rest. I escaped because ... you know ... He pointed to the scar on his upper lip. - He didn't like me, I was too ugly.

– What happened to this boy?

– He ran away when he fifteen or sixteen. He never came back. He rubbed the root of his nose, squeezed his eyes tight.

There's another reason why I've managed, too.

– What is ?

– The gang.

– The gang?

– We were a bunch of guys who stuck together. Our motto was: "One for all, all for one." Jakob Sperre smiled sadly, "We helped each other, supported each other, comforted each other. We had been in the same homes since we were little, we were the family we needed for each other. I don't know how it would have gone without the Gang.

He stood up and came back with two old-fashioned card boxes. "Here are the children from the orphanage," he said, pointing to one box, the green one. Then he moved his hand to the other one, which was red. - And here are the abusers.

Kajsa måpte - Have you kept an index?

– The answer. Abusers and victims. It's been my little hobby, you could say.

He opened the lid of the green box, took a random card. - This one is dead. Suicide. He took another card: - Suicide. He continued: - Suicide, death by overdose, heart failure, he went abroad, drank himself to death, homeless ...

Kajsa interrupted him, "But someone made it?

– Absolutely. He took out a new card: - Lawyer. Another card: - Politician. He continued: - Researcher, recognized as such. Social manager.

– Resourceful?

– Correct.

– Why don't we hear about them? Why haven't I met any of them?

– Cowards like me? He smiled ironically, "Those who have done well, but don't want everyone to know about the past, the painful childhood and most of all: The abuse. That's why you haven't met them. They don't want to tell you. They

will forget. He stroked the card with his index finger. "But most of them have ended up as welfare clients. Some of them have also done reasonably well. But the largest group are those who didn't make it at all, those who slid down the hill as if life was one big iceberg.

– And the other box?" Kajsa asked, pointing to the red box.

– "Quite different, most have managed very well, no social clients there, no," he replied with a hint of harshness in his voice. "Many have died, of course, but only one I know of took his own life. Some of the deaths are ... er ... quite interesting.

– Will you let me interview you?" she asked.

– Not at all, he replied.

– Why not?

– I'm too much of a coward. I don't want to be stigmatized.

– You don't have to ...

– Oh yes" he interrupted her, "I'll be the director who was abused. He drew mnemonics in the air.

– I can anonymize you, distort your voice...

– I don't think so, no.

– Then there's little I can do," she said.

– "No, that's not right," he said, looking at her sharply. "I've given you this knowledge as a starting point.

– A starting point for ?

– I want you to dig deeper than other journalists who only dig on the surface. I want you to ask the questions: Why aren't the abusers held accountable for what they've done? It's nice that the state might pay compensation, provide some kind of redress, but it's also a pulverization of responsibility. Individuals are the abusers. Not the state.

– "But where do I start?" asked Kajsa, exasperated.

– "You can start with this," he said and handed her a card.

"Arne Slettemoen" it said. "Died August 26, 1971." That was all. Kajsa made a note on the pad.

– And once you've figured that out, you can proceed with this," he said, handing her a sheet of paper. Red for danger," he added. "Of course, I've computerized everything over the last few years. This is a list, a printout.

– What about the second box?

– You can't have them, they're like me, they have to choose if they want to come forward.

– Why are you giving me this?" she asked.

– "Because I have to," he said, "because you need to know everything, everything has to come out. Everything. And he repeated: - Someone has to know.

His eyes lingered on her, sad. - No one must know that you got this from me. Not a soul. Not at your work either. And I'd appreciate it if you didn't contact me again, I have nothing more to say. But dig into the case, because it's not just about what happens in terms of redress for the orphanage children or the story of what really happened to the children. Its about punishment and no one knows, 's even worse. Someone has to punish those who should be punished. Only then is everything settled.

– What do you mean by "what's worse"? she asked.

– "Now we're moving into dangerous terrain," he said, looking out the window. "We all have our secrets. And when society doesn't punish those who should be punished, someone else might.

As she said goodbye, she asked: "Do you know how it went with the boy you told me about, "Slaven"?

– He is dead.

That evening, she sat on the terrace and thought about the letter she had received. Jorunn had called and said that no one knew who had delivered it. But mostly she thought about Jakob Sperre.

"What no one knows. What's worse," he had said. What did he mean by that? Several times during the conversation

she had the feeling that he was trying to tell her something she couldn't understand.

She took out her notebook, flipped through the notes, but got . It annoyed her. Why couldn't he just say what was on his mind? If there was something more. Was there something Sperre had said without her stopping to think about it, something she should have followed up, asked more about? "This case is not about redress. It's much bigger than that. It's about punishment," he had said. She understood that, it made sense. He believed that those who had committed criminal acts against children should be punished. Fair enough. But what about the name he had given her: Arne Slettemoen. Who was that? Punishment, Slettemoen, what's even worse, when society doesn't punish those who should be punished, someone else might. The words churned around in her head in one big mass. She couldn't get a grip on it. After three glasses of red wine, unable to sort out her thoughts, she went inside, opened her laptop and Googled Arne Slettemoen. But she got nothing.

Hits.

At the same time, Aksel stuck his head out the door.

– "Is this where you're sitting?" he said, as if surprised. She held her hand casually over the coffee cup.

Why doesn't he give me a hug, she thought.

– How is the investigation going?" she asked.

– Bad, but you know I can't talk about it.

– "No, I was just making conversation," she said sarcastically.

– Don't get angry, then.

– I'm not angry, but you can tell me a bit without going into details. I'm not looking for information as a journalist, I'm just interested in how my husband is doing at work.

– Yes, thank you, good. Very interesting, an unusual case. But frustrating. He looked tired and ran a hand over his face.

– Well, I'm going to , I'm dead tired.

– "Dead tired is probably the right word," she said, smiling at his choice of words.

– Funny, he said. But he was smiling, too.

– "You're pretty when you smile," she said. "You should try it more often.

– "It's not always easy," he said and came out to her, took her face in his hands and kissed her. - Are you coming?" he asked.

– Yes, she replied.

7

– Isn't it time we smoked a little peace pipe, or maybe got drunk at Smuget? There's so little glam about you, why should you try so hard to appear like a boring, gray mouse?

Vidar Kvande stood outside the entrance to Kanal 4 and waited for her when she went to work the next day.

Kvande looked like a strange cross between a bohemian and a gentleman. He always had a beard several days old, long hair, usually in a ponytail, but sometimes it hung loose. Kajsa didn't have a clue about expensive suits, she had a husband who was totally uninterested in clothes, but there was something about the cut and fabric of Kavande's suits that made her think they had been bought in Milan or Paris. But he never wore a shirt and tie, only a gray or black T-shirt underneath, preferably white. Kwande's image was "rich bohemian".

He was also a man who stood out in the landscape at almost two meters tall. His face was not exactly pretty, his mouth was unusually large, but his lips were narrow.

Kajsa didn't quite know how to respond. It didn't matter, he hardly noticed, because he just carried on. - I've figured out that you don't like me - I don't understand why, he said and smiled indulgently. - Everyone else , he added with a little ironic laugh. - But I don't care, my goal in life is not to be liked. He stopped the flow of words and surveyed her, waiting for a reaction.

– What do you want?" asked Kajsa in a measured tone.

– Dismissive as always, he said with an indulgent smile and a voice reminiscent of a lot of whisky.

Kajsa did not answer.

– Okay, okay, okay. You're a gray, grumpy mouse. I don't care about that. What's important to me is that you're a skilled journalist. I respect that - and need . He paused, eyed her, frowned and waited for an answer. When she didn't, he continued: "I'm upset! He raised his voice. - Extremely upset!

– All right, she said. She didn't quite know what else he wanted her to say. Maybe she could say something about how it wouldn't take much for him to get upset. But she just waited for the rest.

– Really? Is that all you have to say? Maybe you're not as deep as I thought. Do you know that journalists call me all the time, wanting me to comment on all sorts of things. They know they have a case if they get something out of me. But you ... He took a deep breath and his arms. "You ... you're not interested when *I* come to *you*. What? You were going to say: And why are you so upset, Vidar? Or maybe you'd rather say Kvande to me? Well, I'll tell you, Kajsa - or is it Coren and Kvande between us now? He didn't wait for an answer. "Either way, I'll tell you, I'm so damn tired of these bloody politicians we have in this country. And then you should say: Why are you so fed up with the politicians then, Kvande?

He was right. Kajsa would have been a poor journalist if she hadn't taken an interest in what he was saying. Here one of Norway's richest and most media-savvy celebrities scolding the police. Clearly a case with explosives. Headline news even.

– Hey, I'll listen to what you have to say if you stop asking me out to dinner or theater performances or whatever you come up with. I never make personal contact with an interview subject. Is that understood?

– Kajsa, Kajsa," he said indulgently, "I'm just worried...

I'm sorry you're not having enough fun in life. But if it's case that you want to by without the great experiences I can give you, then I don't give a damn! He stuck out his lower lip like a petulant child, but there was a glint of amusement in his eyes.

– "Okay," she said, "why are you so upset with the politicians, Kvande?

– I have a story to tell. Do you have time for a coffee? Kajsa looked at the clock on her cell phone. The morning meeting be-

"Okay," she said and dialed the boss's number to let him know she had to meet a source.

At Kaffebrenneriet in Akersgata, there was a queue of people thirsty for coffee and hungry for breakfast. They wedged themselves onto two bar stools by the window.

– So, now I got what I wanted. A little tête-à-tête with you after all," he said with a wide grin.

– "Don't you dare," she replied, but she couldn't help smiling either.

Vidar Kvande explained that he was going to a funeral the next day - for a friend who couldn't wait any longer, as he put it.

– Wait for ?" asked Kajsa.

– For compensation for a lost life. But most of all, to be believed, for someone to say to him: It wasn't your fault, we responsibility, we apologize and are very sorry on your behalf, and you can be sure that we will provide you with redress as mon- ner.

Kvande said that he had known Einar Kryger for many years. They had studied together and started a band with a couple of other classmates. "You probably won't believe it, but I'm not just a guitarist the class of Jimi Hendrix," he smiled broadly, "I'm also an exceptionally good judge of character. I know what Einar was carrying," he added with a sudden seriousness that she 't relate to.

They had been in regular contact. Not because Einar was the one who kept in touch, but because Kvande had him his protégé.

– It wasn't the actual replacement that Einar was interested in. He was fine. I made sure of that. But he needed to hear that someone took responsibility for what happened. His childhood was shitty, you can't imagine! He graduated from college as a grandfather, but never worked. He was so filled with anxiety that in the end he couldn't even leave his apartment. "I'm not just a man with a lot of money, I also have a big heart. His smile may have been meant to be ironic, but it seemed to Kajsa that it caused him pain to admit it. His face took on a naked look, and for the first time she found Kvande sympathetic.

– I have established a memorial fund: Einar Kryger Memorial Fund. For those whom no one sees. Her voice was more rusty than usual. Kajsa thought: Wow, the guy is about to cry. She pretended not to notice, just looked out of the window, giving him time to . "The ones no one sees." It was like hearing Sperre's words. "I was the one no one saw - the invisible one."

She should have checked with the ministry a long time ago about the status of the orphanage children. Her conversation with Kvande prompted her to call the ministry on her way back to work. She got hold of the state secretary, who told her that the minister would soon come to a conclusion as to whether the cases were obsolete.

"Whether the cases were obsolete," Kajsa thought. Obsolete? Was that what the minister with the crocodile tears was concerned about? What about finding out what had happened? Who was responsible? How it could happen? Why weren't they heard sooner? And not least: What she hadn't thought about before Sperre asked the question: Why aren't the perpetrators held accountable for their misdeeds?

Kajsa thought that politicians who initiated investigations and

investigations, often came across as clumsy and rather pathetic. This time it would have been the right thing to do. But did the minister do it? No, he didn't.

She called the head of the Family, Culture and Administration Committee in the Norwegian Parliament and told him what she had been told by the ministry. Frp's spokesman was furious: "I've been urging the minister to initiate a national investigation for several weeks now. Come here with a camera!" he said.

Kajsa disliked this type of journalism. It was too simple. But that was also how political journalism worked. The opposition attacked, the government had to defend itself. And she and others ran after them with the microphone.

She phoned the state secretary again and asked for an interview with the minister. She said she wanted to do a story about where the orphanage case stood. This wasn't untrue, but she failed to mention what context she wanted to put the interview in. The press contact didn't ask either. So there you go.

In the afternoon, she interviewed Frp's family policy spokesman. He spared no expense. He called the minister arrogant, cold, insensitive and incompetent in one sentence. Afterwards, she interviewed the Minister for Children and Family Affairs, who was pleased to tell her that they would soon have finished assessing the legal side of the issue, and even though many of the cases seemed obsolete, it might still be possible to offer the orphanage children
"a certain amount of compensation if they could document violations".

– But isn't that the problem in these cases, Kajsa wanted to know, - that they can't document what they claim to have been subjected to.

The minister believed it would be a mistake to start handing out money to anyone who made claims "just like that".

– What about a national investigation that could provide a basis for documenting the extent of the alleged abuse?" asked Kajsa.

– I would encourage those who believe they have been subjected to neglect and the like to report this, along with the necessary documentation for the allegations.

– But, does the minister think these people have the resources to do so?

The serious and compassionate expression on the 's face disappeared for a second, as if he was coming out of it, but he quickly recovered. "If they don't have that, they must of course get competent help in such a process," he said.

Kajsa couldn't resist the temptation to delve deeper: "But these are people who are often struggling both mentally and socially, and who are also far below the poverty line and can't afford a lawyer?

At this point, the Minister asked for a break in the interview. He turned to the state secretary for help. Kajsa discreetly signaled to the photographer for the camera to roll.

They bowed their heads together and whispered, everything was caught on tape. Then the minister back in his chair. "Can you ask the question again," he said. Kajsa did as she was told. She knew what the answer would be. "These are aspects of the case that we obviously need to look ," he said, thinking the interview was over.

When Kajsa started to ask another question, the Secretary of State broke in and announced that the time was up. - Just one last question?" asked Kajsa.

– Okay then, he said sourly.

– How do you react to the fact that children in orphanages who have previously applied for compensation and been rejected - even though they did so before the case was time-barred - have taken their own lives?

Again, the minister looked as if he didn't know what to say; he licked his lower lip nervously. "It ... er ... we have no knowledge of it ... er ... but ... it's, to put it bluntly, absolutely terrible.

– Okay, thanks," said Kajsa.

Both interviews were to be used the next day. But before she could edit them together, she had to attend Einar Kryger's funeral. Kvande had no problem whatsoever with letting her be present with the camera. On the contrary, Kvande realized that it would give Kajsa strong material to create exactly the reportage he wanted.

When Kajsa walked into Vestre Krematorium, she was expecting a small crowd based on what Kvande had told her about Einar's life. But to her surprise, there were forty or fifty people there. She sat at the back with the photographer, and asked him to leave the camera on throughout the service.

It all began the way funerals begin; with humble, mournful organ music. The rest was completely unusual. There was no priest, no scripture reading. However, a well-known actor was there. He read poems by Arnulf Øverland. First "The Hundred Violins":

...
And one day the holy night will come,
when the sordines of eternity
turns the bitterest anguish you've ever felt
into a hundred violins.

In between there was music, all from the public address system: Bruce Springsteen and Patti Smith. When it got quiet and Kajsa was getting ready to leave, she suddenly heard a voice:

"I'd like to be with you now." (Weak .) But of course I can't." (Another chuckle.)

Kajsa looked around, saw how people looked at each other in amazement, smiled and nodded. Yes, it was Einar who was talking.

"I hope you've enjoyed ... what shall we call it ... the show? I won't keep you long, I only have a couple of

things I want to say: Now that I have chosen to end my life, I don't want you to feel sad about it. My life had come to a point where living cost more than it was worth. Therefore, this is my choice, and I leave with ... well, with a kind of joy and relief that it's over.

The second thing I want to say is this: My life was ruined by people who were supposed to give me a better life. A *better* life. It couldn't have been *worse*. Any life I could have had would have been better than the one I got. It was ruined by adults who were supposed to give me the care I didn't get at home. Instead, they gave me a life without enough food, without any warmth, they didn't meet any of the most basic needs a child. Some beat me, punished me for trifles - and (long pause) some raped me and subjected me to serious abuse. But that wasn't the worst of it. The worst thing wasn't what they did to me, the worst thing was what they didn't give me: Love. Because in that way they deprived me of my human dignity and my ability to love. Those who did that should have been punished. I have written many letters to politicians in all parties in the Storting. All I got back was compassion, and I thought: They don't my story. So I was deprived of my human dignity. All over again. The politicians have a lot to answer for because for years they have known about the fate of the children in orphanages without giving us redress. (Long pause.) In the richest country in the world, we lack nothing, but remember that without love people die. Take care of each other!"

There was complete silence. Kajsa saw that Kvande was gesturing to the actor. He walked up to the coffin and read another poem by Arnulf Øverland.

Break out tonight,
The red lily of my pain!
You have possessed
my being and my will.

You drank my dream.
Your thirst was never quenched.
Your mouth is sore
of blood that you have drunk.

Scent in my thicket!
I am an empty cistern,
empty and abandoned.

...

Break out tonight,
lily and storm and star!

As soon as he finished, Eva Cassidy's warm and distinctive voice poured out into the chapel:

Someday I'll wish upon a star and
wake up
where the clouds are far behind me.
Where troubles melt like lemon drops
away above the chimney tops,
that's where you'll find me.

Kajsa couldn't help it. She cried for a man she had never known and thought: Holy shit, this is going to be crazy good television!

Afterwards, Kvande explained both the large gathering and the content of the funeral service. "It was Einar Kryger himself who had decided how everything should be. He had written everything down exactly; which poems were to be read, what music was to be played, and he had recorded the speech on a CD.

Most of the people there were other orphans. Kryger

had started a support association together with three others who had been his friends since they were in an orphanage together. The association had grown enormously over the past year and now had forty members. The association's board of directors was to manage the money Kvande had set aside in Einar Kryger's memorial fund.

After the funeral, Kajsa edited two stories, totaling eight minutes, for the top of the 20 broadcast.

The shift manager, who was a temp from the finance department, said he was in heaven, but was embarrassed to realize that it was an inappropriate comment. Kajsa was furious when he wanted:
"Orphanage child took his own life. Flayed the politicians in a speech from the grave" as the headline. Instead it became: "Orphanage child couldn't bear to live. Blamed politicians for a ruined life."

The first case was about Einar Kryger. She sent his entire speech unedited with pictures of the coffin and the church room - no disturbing pictures of other people present. This was his "show", and the images emphasized that: The slow zooms and pans along with close-ups of the coffin and the wreaths with the last greetings from his friends, some private photos of him that Kvande had given her; one with his guitar, one out in nature and one with a champagne glass raised towards the photographer.

It would be an understatement to say that the minister got off lightly in the next case: Celebrity, financier and media tycoon Vidar Kvande spoke about his friend Einar with great seriousness and indignation, and at the same time lashed out at the minister for not immediately launching a national investigation and offering the victims compensation for their ruined lives. Kajsa did something she had rarely done before, she didn't edit out the minister's wish to stop the interview to consult with the state secretary. On the contrary, she used it because she believed it showed where the issue really stood and what the minister's position was. She couldn't fit the interview with the Frp spokesperson. He wanted to get , but it didn't matter.

What she was left with was so strong that she didn't need predictable criticism from the opposition. It was allowed to be a sequel for the evening watch to the morning broadcasts.

The next day, the minister called a press conference. He was "pleased that it had now finally been decided to start a national investigation into the orphanage scandal". The government believed that
"the legal assessments of whether the cases are time-barred are subordinate to the state's moral responsibility to provide the orphanage children with redress in the form of financial compensation".

8

The next morning, Kajsa went straight from the Asker train to Aftenposten's archive and asked for the newspapers from August 26 to 30, 1971. She flipped through them quickly, but didn't find the name Arne Slettemoen mentioned. She went through the newspapers again, more carefully this time. Then she found a small note at the bottom of a page: A recreation leader, not named, had died by drowning on a trip with some boys from an orphanage in Oslo.

The note stated that the police concluded that the death was an accident; the man had fallen off a pier during the night. Slettemoen's name was not mentioned, but she was sure that she had found what she was looking for. The note ended with Chief Inspector Henrik Kjelstad stating that there had been no witnesses to the accident.

Henrik Kjelstad. Oh, so he was the one who had the case. Kajsa hadn't spoken to him since he retired a few years ago. On her way back to work, she sent an SMS to 1880 and searched for his name. She got one hit, at Nesodden.

It was quiet on the political front that day, no press conferences, no reports in other media to follow up. She dialed Kjelstad's number.

A slightly brusque female voice answered. Kajsa introduced herself and asked if it was possible to meet Henrik Kjelstad.

– He's walking the dog, she was .

– Is it possible to meet him when he returns?

– So what is it that you want?

Kajsa replied that she would like to talk to him about an old criminal case.

– We have lunch at noon, after which he rests, the lady replied dismissively.

– Do you think he has half an hour before lunch, maybe?" asked Kajsa.

– And you might not get anything out of him, he's lost his way a lot lately," she said in a way that made Kajsa think that this was either a woman with the ability to take life as it came, or that she was overprotective of the man.

Henrik Kjelstad was almost two meters tall. She remembered him as a mountain of muscle. Now his clothes hung and sagged, he was skinny and looked like a heron, although his eyes still sharp and his handshake strong. But he used his left hand when he greeted her, and she could see from his crooked face and the way he dragged one leg that he had probably had a stroke. So maybe his wife was just being well-meaningly brusque.

– "My goodness," he said as he greeted Kajsa, "I thought I'd got rid of those journalist rascals a long time ago. He smiled as he said it - a long time ago.

– Yes ... it must be ... Kajsa began hesitantly.

– Exactly six years, he interrupted her.

– "You remember well," she commented with a smile.

– That's easy, it was one of my last cases. The arson in Ski, two children and a woman died. Perpetrator: father and husband. Isn't that right?

– Yes, that's probably right," Kajsa replied.

– But since then I haven't noticed that you've had many cases? He looked at her questioningly. She smiled, he spoke as if they had worked together. Perhaps that's how he had looked at her, when he worked in the CID and she

worked with crime stories. He hadn't always behaved as if they worked in the same industry. He had been a difficult guy for journalists to relate to. But Kajsa had gradually gained respect for the experienced police officer.

– So what does your beautiful face bring to an old man like me?" he asked jokingly, again with that scrutinizing, direct gaze.

Perhaps, like her, he felt it was like meeting an old acquaintance and thought: "It's been a long time, how strange that I haven't thought of you more often, how has your life turned out?

For several years they had been in regular contact, sometimes every day. He had been the one with the information, she the one seeking information. He had the power to give it to her, she threatened, tagged and asked for it. So that's how it had always been between them, and she did what she had always done. She got straight to the point:

– Arne Slettemoen?

Kjelstad raised his eyebrows in surprise, "Um, hm," he said, "I must say, you still have the ability to outrun, it's been a long time since I've heard that name mentioned.

– But you remember that? Kajsa looked at him excitedly.

– Yes, of course I remember.

Kajsa placed a copy of the Aftenposten article on the table. Kjelstad put on his glasses, took the sheet and examined it carefully. Slettemoen. Yes, that might be right.

She was surprised that he immediately recognized the case. He must have experienced many similar cases in his long professional life - he had worked in the police for over forty years. The explanation was simple.

– "It was my first case as a police sergeant," he said. His wife came in with two cups of coffee. She was just like that.

Kajsa had imagined her: a round face surrounded by big gray curls, a strong body, an energetic gait. She greeted Kajsa kindly, but said: "Just half an hour, then he needs to eat and rest. Her tone did not allow for discussion. When she

Kjelstad leaned towards Kajsa: "Better do as she says," he whispered and winked conspiratorially. He took a sip of coffee and continued: "Well, there's another reason why I remember this case.

– What is ?

– The boys. I interviewed all of them, but none of them, were six or seven of them, I think. They seemed to be ... what can I say ... not happy, but almost a bit ... indifferent. Perhaps I would go so far as to use the word relieved, to describe their mood. It was odd.

– How so?

– Yes, everyone expressed that he had been a nice guy. I remember thinking: Why aren't any of them sad that he's dead?

A vague thought, which could not yet be formulated, began to take shape in Kajsa's head. She asked: - What did you find out?

– Slettemoen's blood alcohol level was high and his fly was open. The conclusion was obvious. He had fallen in while pissing. None of the boys had been with him. They all said the same thing, that they had bathed before going to bed, Slettemoen had been with them, but he had been sitting on the pier drinking beer when they went to bed. We concluded that he had pissed off the edge of the pier and fallen in. Tragic, but all too common, unfortunately.

– But?

– Who says there's a but?

Kajsa did not answer. Kjelstad narrowed his eyes and looked at her as if he was . - "You're as sharp as ever," he finally said, smiling good-naturedly. - "Yes, there was a but. But it didn't change our conclusion.

Kajsa thought about what Sperre had told her. The thought that forced itself on her mind matched what Kjelstad had told her, and some pieces fell into place.

– If I tell you that he abused these boys sexually, what would you say?

Kjelstad didn't look the least bit shocked. Either he wasn't, or he was trained not to show it. But the wrinkle across the bridge of his nose deepened a little. He didn't answer directly, instead he said: "There was one thing I wondered about during the investigation, Slettemoen had hit his forehead hard, probably because he had fainted.

– What was strange about that? He hurt himself when he fell, right?

– Yes ... Kjelstad went for it, - but it's not very natural to hit yourself right in the middle of the forehead when you lean out over the edge of the pier. It's possible, of course, but ...

– So you were already thinking at the time ...

– Yes, but there was no evidence for anything other than the obvious conclusion. Besides, the boys were only ten or eleven years old.

– And now what? What do you think now? Abuse...

He interrupted her, "I've been a policeman too long to jump to conclusions. But I'm sure those boys were hiding something. Maybe you've given me the explanation...

She looked at him excitedly.

– That they were behaving strangely because they were trying to hide the fact that they were glad he was dead.

"The police are groping in the dark," wrote the newspapers. He was sitting in his car in the street below Kanal 4, reading the paper. Of course they were groping. He hadn't left any traces. Not on the days he was in the house with them, not earlier in his life. Still, he was dissatisfied. The journalists always used to dig up the dirt that existed. Why weren't they doing that now? They had to at least discover that there was something to talk about from their past? There was no other way out than for him to help.

He wished he could just call. Hear her voice, tell her how it had been, tell her everything, not about the past few days, but about the past. He was she would understand. She would look at him with those brown eyes, with warmth, maybe she would cry for him, hold him,

and he wanted to take her to the forest, where they could lie close to each other and look at the treetops, at the clouds high above them.

He had to be careful. He had begun to think reckless thoughts. But he needed the warmth that thought gave him. He had never felt this way about anyone. Ever. Not even for Ida.

Ida looked like Kajsa, because she also had brown eyes.

He had started to drive past the Kanal 4 house every day when he finished work. Sometimes he'd sit and wait, hoping she'd show up. It had never happened, but as he turned the pages of the newspaper, he looked in the mirror and there she was. She was walking down the street towards the parking garage. He put the car in gear, turned around, drove down, parked and waited. When he saw her come out, he followed her.

It was such a good feeling, as if they were accompanying each other, he pretended they were going somewhere together, and when they arrived, she would jump out of the car and meet him. Put her arms around him. He almost got that good feeling he had in the woods, sitting in the car behind her; that he was safe, that everything was fine.

He followed her all the way out to Nesodden and saw her enter a house. He called Opplysningen and gave the address, curious as to who she was visiting. When the lady's voice said Henrik Kjel- stad, he was shocked.

He could never forget that man; the long, powerful body, but most of all his eyes, those unusual blue eyes. Kjelstad had raised his hand to ruffle his hair, at least that's what he was thinking now, but he had backed away, abruptly, he thought he was going to hit him. Kjelstad had looked at him with eyes as if he understood, with a gentleness that felt like a physical touch.

What was Kajsa doing at Kjelstad's? He had to pay even closer attention to her in the future. It would be good for him to be close to her. Even closer than now. So he decided to do what he had been thinking about for the last few days. He was going to put her on the trail so that their past would be known.

The thought made him happy. It was like whispering in her ear, almost like a caress.

Kajsa called Sperre in the car on the way home from Nesodden.

It was a short conversation. When he heard it was her, he replied that he had nothing more to add. He was unwavering in his resolve not to have any more contact with her. "I've given you everything I know," he said.

– Yes, but was Slettemoen the same as the leisure leader you told ...

That's as far as she got. Sperre had hung up.

She couldn't be sure as long as Sperre didn't confirm it. But it was certainly possible that Sperre had been there when Slettemoen died. Perhaps he had even been involved in killing him.

Is that what he meant when he said that everyone has their secrets?

9

Kajsa rolled her eyes and sat up in bed. The clock radio only showed half past five. She reached for her cell phone on the bedside table. Who was calling at this hour?

– Hello?

– Why aren't you coming? It was the mother.

– Coming?

– Yes, you supposed to pick me up at five o'clock.

– Pick you up? Kajsa didn't understand anything.

– Yes, we were supposed to train together today at Elixia.

Training? It started to dawn on Kajsa. Her mother was one of many keen pensioners who worked out twice a week at Elixia in Asker. On this particular day, they had agreed to work out together, going for a run in the equipment room.

– Do you know what time it is, mom?

– "Yes, it's after half past five, and we agreed on five," the mother said reproachfully.

– But it's morning, not afternoon.

There was silence at the other end. - Mom, are you there?

– Yes, I .. Is it morning? Is it half past five in the morning?

– Yes.

– Oh, sorry, Kajsa. I fell asleep on the couch... it must have been last night, and then I woke up and thought I had taken a nap.

– "Yes, yes," said Kajsa, forcing her voice to sound light and unconcerned, "these things can happen. You'd better go back to bed.

She herself couldn't sleep anymore.

Kajsa went to the bathroom, took a shower and stood for a long time. "I have it good. Healthy children, a good job, good finances, a successful husband who is well liked, I have a car and a house, a job I love and everything I need. It's all going to work out, Aksel is right, my mom is just a little forgetful, which is completely normal for people her age. It's going to work out with Aksel and me too, we're just in a phase where we don't have enough time for each other. That will change when the children get older. Maybe we can get a babysitter and go out together, be boyfriends.

Like the couple at the rest stop.

She thought about them often, which reinforced the feeling of having missed something.

Girlfriends. What should we talk about? What do you talk about when you're boyfriends just sitting opposite each other at a table?" she thought.

She them, the two of them at the rest stop. The image of them had stayed with her ever since last summer.

The experience was like a short film she ran over and over again, a story about closeness, a description of an undefined longing she hadn't understood before.

They had been on their way to Sweden on vacation. Along the way, they had stopped at a gas station. There had been a playground with a few tables outside. She and Aksel had sat down at one of the tables while the children climbed in the playpen. They had sat in the sun, eaten sausages, drank coffee, shared a four-leaf clover, didn't talk, just looked at the kids.

A couple of their own age, with two children, had come and sat down at a table some distance away.

First, their children came running and threw themselves into each swing. The mother had sat down and watched them. Soon after, the man arrived. He didn't sit on the other side of the table, as Aksel did, but straddled the bench, close to the woman. She had leaned against him and

smiled up at him, he had kissed her lightly. On the mouth.

She had looked at Aksel. He was sitting with his cell phone and sending an SMS, probably work, she had thought.

She looked at the kids again for a while, before looking over at the couple. They were sitting close together, he whispered something in her , she laughed.

Just then she had seen the movement under her blouse, his hand stroking her breasts. They sat and pretended nothing, just watching the children. Neither face expressed arousal or desire, they just looked completely calm, harmonious.

She thought that maybe the children weren't theirs, or maybe they were just hers or his, that they had just met each other, that they were new to each other, a newly in love couple who couldn't get enough of each other, like she and Aksel had been. Once.

But soon after, she heard the kids calling them mom and dad.

The eldest boy was a couple of years older than Anders. So they had known each other as long as she and Aksel.

When did she and Aksel stop being so ? Why had it ended? She did not know. She looked at him, his cell phone beeped, he was distant, absorbed in his work. Right now. All the time. The couple stood up. The man called the kids, then he took the woman's hand and they walked to the car. Hand in hand. Just to Walk ten meters.

When had Aksel taken her hand when they walked next to each other? Or: When had she shaken his hand?

It was the image of this couple on the bench at a gas station that had made her think differently. For a long time, since she saw it, little by little, day by day, it had created a growing unease in her; the feeling of having lost something.

After showering, she stood naked in front of the mirror. Almost forty. Not bad. A bit of a belly, breasts that bore the marks of having been sucked empty by two children, but slimmer than many people her age, although the skin on her stomach seemed to have grown a number too big after the last birth. She applied body lotion, massaged her skin hard, walked closer to the mirror, put day cream on her face, blow-dried her hair, gathered it in a bun, stood and looked at herself.

Not ugly. Not pretty. Average. Pretty eyes.

The management of Kanal 4 was looking for a new presenter for the debate program Dagsorden. The only thing that had been said was that they preferred a woman.

She wanted the job, and several colleagues had hinted that she should be considered. But she wasn't going to get it. She was too average.

The editor-in-chief had said so. Not directly, but she wasn't stupid.

– "So this is where you're sitting," he had said one day when he stopped by the newsroom. He had sat down on her desk, so close that his knee touched her thigh - "One of Norway's best political reporters," he had added.

– "You have a signature, my girl," he continued. You can tell when a report is yours by the pictures, the editing, the way you use language. And not least: The voice. A little hoarse. There's no mistaking you.

She couldn't help but feel flattered - "Thank you, that's nice to hear," she said.

– But," he said, holding up a finger, leaning forward and whispering, "you could be even better when you go LIVE.

– Really? She looked at him expectantly.

– I have a philosophy: Women on this channel should be what our female viewers dream of being: Professional, skilled, well-groomed, well-dressed and pretty. And they should be so that our male viewers get ... He leaned closer to her - wet dreams, he whispered. Then he leaned back and laughed so loudly

that the others in the open landscape around the desk turned and looked at them. They were probably wondering what he was laughing at, because Kajsa had turned bright red.

The boss stood : "Some light stripes in the hair, a little more makeup would be nice, ," he said and winked. "I love blond diners, that's why I've been married to three of them," he said and laughed out loud.

10

The next day she had her first day off in a long time. She had booked an appointment at the hairdresser, which to her surprise gave a better result than she had expected - although she didn't think it would lead to anyone's "wet dreams". Perhaps at Aksel's? she thought, smiling at her own reflection and the hairdresser behind her.

When she got home, it was only two o'clock and she wanted to for a jog before picking up the children.

Perhaps it was deliberate, perhaps not, but after a while she found herself close to the murder scene. She stopped and before deciding to walk up to the house. She went through the gate. It had been ten days since the murders, and the police restraints had not yet been removed. She recognized the creepy feeling from the first time she was here. It had been gone when the yard was full of police officers, but now, standing here alone, she felt it again.

She walked slowly towards the house, looked around, it was completely quiet. Still, she got the feeling that someone was watching her, just like when she had been here for the first time with Hanne.

She walked towards the house, the front door was sealed, the kitchen curtains were closed. She stretched on tiptoe, tried to peek in through a gap, but only saw a bit of the kitchen table.

She walked around to the balcony at the back. The door to the living room was also locked. She checked the other buildings, too.

They were locked and sealed. Finally, she crossed the yard and followed the path around the pond, where she stopped and stood looking at the house from a distance. She shot herself.

On her way back to the car, she passed Birte and Njål's house. Njål was sitting on the stairs, like last time.

– Hi, Njål!" she called out. He did not answer. She walked through the gate and up to him.

– What do you want?" he asked. The tone of voice did not match the rude words.

– Is your mom home?

He nodded and tossed his head towards the door. She knocked and went in.

– Hello! Are you home, Birte?" she called out and walked further into the hallway. She heard Birte answer and went into the kitchen. Birte was lying on the sofa in the living room. - Hi, she said, - am I disturbing you? "No, no, just lie down," she added as Birte began to sit up. The old lady sat back against the cushions.

– Are you ill? Kajsa looked at her with concern. Her skin was pale and damp.

– "I don't know," Birte replied. She was breathing heavily and looked tired and worn out. It was as if she had grown older since Kajsa last saw her.

– I'm just so weak, I can't do anything anymore, I can't cope, I get dizzy just walking across the floor, I fell , right on the kitchen floor, can you understand that?

Kajsa asked who her GP was and got the name of a doctor in central Asker. - I'll call the doctor, she said.

– Oh no, don't do that.

– Why not?

– Njål. "What will happen to Njål if I'm not here?" she whispered. "He has no one else but me. Lately he's been a bit ... what can I say ... a bit off, as if something is bothering him.

– Do you have more children?" asked Kajsa.

– Yes, another son.

– Maybe I can call him?

– No, there's probably no , he's always so sad.

– What is name? Where does he live?

– Ingvald. Ingvald Kristiansen. He lives in Bergen. He doesn't have time to come just because I'm a bit unwell, you see.

– Then I'll call your GP," Kajsa said firmly, dialing the number she had received from Opplysningen while they talked.

No one answered at the doctor's office. Kajsa put on her handsfree and waited. - Shall I make some coffee?" she asked. Birte just nodded. After twenty minutes, she still hadn't through to the doctor. She looked at the clock, it was approaching four o'clock.

I have to pick up Thea and Anders, she thought stressed.

She let the phone continue to ring at the doctor's, then picked up Birte's coat, dressed her, asked Njål to get dressed too and together they supported Birte into the car. She picked up Thea from nursery, Anders from after-school care, drove to the center of Asker, parked and took the whole group to the doctor. There, the waiting room was full. She stood in front of the door and waited for the doctor's secretary to open. The woman behind the glass wasn't looking at her, she was on the phone and working on her computer. In the end, the woman finished the phone call, got up and left. The whole time, Kajsa could hear the phone ringing. After several minutes, the woman returned, still not looking at Kajsa, and picked up the phone again.

Thea came and stood next to her mother and started pulling her arm.

– I'm hungry, mom.

Kajsa said she would have to wait, they would soon be going home to eat.

– I want food now! She recognized the whiny tone in Thea's voice, knew she was about to make a complete fool of herself. - I'm hungry, she repeated, with even more defiance.

– I WANT food now!

- There are some nice books over there on the table," said Kajsa.

– Go and have a look, and we'll be off soon.

– I don't want to! I'm hungry. Thea pulled her hard by the arm. Kajsa looked at the woman behind the glass, still no contact. Birte was sitting on the chair, she had put her head on Njål's shoulder. He just sat straight up and down and bit his thumbnail. Something restless and uncertain had come over him.

Anders was playing with some Lego bricks on a small table. Occasionally he looked up at his mother. Patient Anders, she thought. He's probably hungry too, but he's content to wait.

Thea had started crying, she had sat down on the floor and was pulling hard on Kajsa's jacket. Kajsa felt that everyone was looking at her, her face was hot and red, and she could feel the sweat running down her arms. She bent down, shushed Thea and tried to lift her up. But Thea protested loudly and hit her. Just then, the woman pressed a button and the glass in front of her slowly moved aside with a mechanical sound.

– Yes? The woman looked at her questioningly.

– I'm here with an elderly woman who ...

The woman interrupted her: - Date of birth?

– I don't know, but I'm coming because ...

– Name? Do you have a class?

– No, I...

– Don't you have an appointment? The woman looked at her in irritation.

– No, I've called and called without getting through.

– You need to make an appointment, can't you see it's full here?

– Yes, but ...

– Who is the GP?

Kajsa gave her the name of the doctor. "He's off today," the woman replied. Kajsa could barely hear what the woman was saying over Thea's howling. She leaned forward.

– I actually don't give a damn where the doctor is, surely there are other doctors here? I bring in an elderly woman who needs help, and we sit here until she gets it!

The woman opened her mouth, but before she could say anything, Kajsa continued, "She's sick, she needs help, and she needs

it now. The woman opened her mouth again, but Kajsa continued.

– This woman is just an acquaintance, she is not my responsibility, not my mother, not even a neighbor. I have two children with me, and her retarded son, the children haven't eaten for hours, they are tired and tired, do you think you could please get us in pretty quickly?

– "There are a lot of people ahead of you in the queue," the woman replied sourly.

– Okay, then I have to take the children and go home. Then I can leave the woman and her son to you. She bent down, defied Thea's protests and lifted her up.

– Hold on, I'll see what I can do. The glass door creaks into place.

It was not until seven o'clock that Kajsa and the children were home that day. The doctor had determined that Birte had had a small drip,
and she had very high blood pressure. He had taken a lot of blood tests, and Birte was to return after the weekend. She then drove to Trekanten, parked in the parking garage, took Thea and Anders to the pharmacy, while Birte and Njål stayed in the car and picked up some blood thinners for Birte. She then drove Birte and Njål home.

Thea had fallen asleep in the car and she had to carry her in. By then, Kajsa was so tired that she almost just sat down on the floor in the hallway.

– Where on earth have you been? Aksel was standing in the living room doorway, looking angry.

In his hands he had a tub full of folded socks. Wow, she thought, now the world won't last until Easter. Black, single socks lay all over the living room table. The lamp above the table was on full power. Yet all the socks looked exactly the same.

– Do you know what time it is?" he added in a reproachful tone.

– I have called you many times, sent several messages to you without getting an answer.

– The phone is discharged, she replied tiredly.

– But it's almost bedtime for the kids, I've been waiting for you for two hours, didn't you think I might get anxious!

– "No, I wasn't thinking about you!" she replied harshly. Her voice rose several notches. "I've had an exhausting afternoon, and the last thing I thought about was you! She started to undress Thea and Anders. Thea protested in her half-sleep, Anders just walked quietly past his father and into the living room.

– But where have you been?

– At the doctor's.

– At the doctor's, who is sick?

– Birte.

– Who is Birte? Aksel looked at her in exasperation.

Kajsa told me about Birte, that she had visited her when she was out jogging.

– But what do you have to do there? Aksel's voice was even angrier now: "Can't you stay away from the murder case? You promised you wouldn't work on my cases, you said ...

Kajsa looked at Aksel's excited face, met his hard gaze. - Shut up! she interrupted. - Stop it, Aksel. She heard the strain of crying in her own voice.

Aksel didn't answer, just bent down, picked up Thea and turned his back to her.

Then she straight down on the floor.

– What is it, mom? Anders stood looking at her in the doorway. She stroked her eyes.

– It's nothing, I'm just very tired. With an effort, she stood up. "Let's go to the bathroom," she said in a light voice.

After the children had fallen asleep, she waited for Aksel to take the initiative to talk, to ask her what had happened, to clear the air, to remove the distance between them. But he said nothing, just went into his home office.

She remained seated in front of the TV, but she wasn't paying attention.

Aksel's hard gaze was still fixed on her.

He probably thinks I'm angry, but I'm just sad, so very sad, she thought. But he neither sees it nor cares about it. He's not interested.

– This in the mailbox.

She was on her way up the stairs to bed when Aksel came out of the home office with an envelope in his hand. - I forgot to give it to you, he said.

Kajsa Coren was written on the envelope, which was without a stamp or postmark, obviously placed in the mailbox without going through Posten. She opened the envelope. The sheet of paper inside read: *What happened during the war?*

Kajsa tumbled down a flight of stairs. -

What is it?" asked Aksel.

Kajsa handed him the letter.

– "You're lying, you're working on the murder case," he exclaimed indignantly.

– No, I work with politics.

– Then why are you getting this!

– I guess I don't know! Kajsa stood up abruptly, "Is that all you have to say, all you care about? Do you think it's pleasant to receive a letter like this, perhaps?

– You must realize that ...

– "Aksel, I can't take it," she interrupted him. He sighed.

– Sorry, I'm just getting a little anxious.

– Do you mean to say that the content of the letter tells you something? How do you link it to the murder case?

He did not answer.

– Is there something in your past that you're working on?" she continued. "And yes, I know you can't talk about it. But you can at least tell me, so I know if this is something to worry about.

– I do not like it.

– Why is that?

Aksel looked at her thoughtfully.

– Whoever sent it knows something about the couple, about their past. And who knows that?

– The killer, for example," said Kajsa.

– Do you understand why I'm worried about you receiving this letter?

She opened her mouth, but before she could respond, he said: "I'm taking this letter to the police. And one more thing: You'll have to keep the time thing to yourself.

She opened her mouth again, but Aksel looked at her seriously: – End of discussion!

Kajsa couldn't sleep, despite being so tired her body ached. Her thoughts gave her no peace. Who had sent the letter? Why was it sent to her in particular? Should she have told Aksel about the letter she received at work, was it from the same sender? Yes, she should. No, she couldn't bear it. Aksel would be even angrier. What happened during the war? Suddenly it hit her: Godø, they were called Godø. A Sunnmøre name, a name from Godøya. She wanted to call someone there, perhaps a local historian who could help her find out if they were originally from there. Aksel didn't need to know anything about it.

Wasn't Godøy in Giske municipality? Just outside Åle- sund? Sure, she had been there once with her parents, on a Sunday trip to Alnes, this small village with the big lighthouse.

11

When Kajsa visited Birte and Njål to see how things were going the next day, they were visited by Karsten Kjølås, who led the investigation into the double murder. He wanted to talk to Njål.

– "Hi, Kajsa," he greeted. "So you're working on the case," he said with a sarcastic smile.

– Not really," she replied shortly, "I'm just a friend of the family.

He took Njål into the kitchen, stopped at the door and turned to Kajsa.

– Are you okay?" he asked, meeting her gaze. Kajsa felt her cheeks heat up. Aksel had of course shown him the letter she had received.

– Yes, she replied, looking down.

– Do you know him?" Birte asked in a whisper when he had closed the door.

– Yes, she replied.

– Handsome guy," said Birte.

Twenty minutes later, Njål came back into the living room. Kajsa noticed that he was chewing hard on his thumb. The indifference and calm were gone.

– What did he want?" his mother asked
anxiously. Njål just chewed and chewed on
his thumb.

– Njål, what did he ?

– The forest.

– The forest?

– What I did in the forest.

– What else?

– He asked about animals and stuff, how I like animals.

– Did you see any animals in the forest?

– No, no animals.

– Did you see anything else?

Njål chewed even more doggedly on his finger.

– Did you see anyone in the forest? Kajsa knew him so well now that she knew it meant he was nervous.

– "Njål, what did you see?" she asked gently.

– A man... a man.

– Where was he standing?

– On the other side of the pond.

– What did he do?

– He looked at the house.

– What else did he do?

– Nothing at all.

– Was he standing perfectly still?

– Yes.

– How long?

– Yes.

– Did you tell the police officer?

– No, you don't.

– You have to tell the policeman everything, you know.

She didn't get an answer. - Did you see anything else? What did the man do afterwards?

But Njål just looked out of the window and chewed on his finger without answering.

Kajsa sat for a long time talking to Birte. "I answer everything they ask, of course I , but it's quite uncomfortable, I don't want to be involved in a murder case," she told Kajsa.

Kajsa brought VG and Dagbladet with her, and Birte quickly flipped to the article about the double murder. There was less and less about the case. In recent days, there had been no

some things. But on this day, VG had a big headline, a "non-news": NO LEADS IN THE DOUBLE MURDER CASE, it said. Birte skimmed the article several times before putting the paper down.

– They won't get anywhere," said Kajsa.

– No ... Birte took off her glasses and sighed. - No ... she resumed, looking thoughtfully out of the window. - They won't get anywhere.

Kajsa hadn't discussed the case much with Birte. She didn't want to seem pushy, didn't want Birte to think that she was after something as a journalist, that that was why she cared. That's why they only talked about it when Birte brought it up. - What are you thinking?" she said gently.

Birte sighed again and took a raspberry drop from a bag on the table. She sat and sucked on the candy for a while before turning her gaze back to Kajsa.

– Can I trust you?" she said.

– "Of course you can," said Kajsa, thinking that maybe she was promising too much. What would she do if Birte knew something important? She pushed the thought away and repeated: - Of course you can trust me.

– It's just strange ... something that is not mentioned. Then she paused, sucked hard on the candy.

– Kajsa finally asked, trying not to sound too eager.

Another thoughtful look from Birte, as if she was considering the pros and cons. Then she took a breath, - there's something ... something that happened a long time ago.

Kajsa said nothing, gave her time.

– They have not always been alone.

– Not alone?

– There was a child there. Once.

– ?

– When Njål was little. A boy Njål's age.

– But ... How ... Kajsa was speechless. - What ... who ... Was it their child?

– I think so.

– How old was he?

– He was small the first time I saw him. I used to go for walks with Ingvald and Njål, carrying Njål in a big shawl on my back. Ingvald was just over three years old when Njål was born. We went for a walk in the woods every morning after Halvor had gone to work, they loved it, we walked every day, whatever the weather. Her eyes became distant and she smiled at the memories - "It was a happy time. Njål wasn't always ... like that. She looked at Njål and narrowed her eyes.

She looked absently out of the window again. Her face smoothed out, she smiled. Then she looked at Kajsa again. She had tears in her eyes. "I was the happiest person in the world. A good husband, two healthy children, what more do you need in life? But ... what do you know about what's to come? Njål was hit by a car on Semsveien, he had a new illness, he barely survived, and then ... She held her hand over her eyes, -... then Halvor collapsed at work, it was his heart, he was only 41 years old ... and then ... well, he didn't make it. And here I was left with the children. Alone.

Kajsa found nothing to say.

After a while, she asked: "Did you used to walk past your house? Between the gates?

– Oh no, we never went between the gates. Not after they moved here. I used to walk on the other side of the pond. That's when I saw her. Alfhild. With the child. The first time. She didn't see me. I was very surprised. I didn't she was expecting a baby.

– Did you see her later? With the baby?

– Yes, several times.

– How old was the boy the last time you saw him?

– Six years, I think.

– What happened?" asked Kajsa.

But Birte didn't answer. "Can't you put the coffee on?" she said.

12

Aksel sat in his home office and worked on the double dragon all weekend. On Saturday he was visited by Kjell Laurit- zen. Kajsa put the children to bed and sat down with the printout from the red card index box. She had already created a folder that she called BARNEHJEM. It contained minutes from all the conversations she'd had on the subject since she started working on the case. She created a new document that she called ABUSERS. She went through the names, a total of fifteen, two of whom were women. How could there be so many? Jakob Sperre really couldn't have met them . "My hobby" he had called it. He must collected material from more places than where he had been himself.

She started with those who were no longer alive, ten in total. Then she listed the five who were still alive. She didn't recognize any of the names.

Kajsa connected her computer to the printer, printed out the document and took it to the terrace with a cup of wine. It was a starry evening, but windy and cold. She looked at the degree stick: zero degrees. She turned on the heat lamp on the wall, picked up the cushions for the outdoor sofa, her fur and wool blanket and sat down in the corner. She sat and looked out to sea, the moon reflected in the surface of the water. She held the first mouthful of wine for a long time, closed her eyes, tilted her head back and took a deep breath. What was she going to do with the information? "Dig into it."

Sperre had said. She couldn't very well go up to any of these people and confront them with what she knew about their past. She was sure that none of them would "come forward" - as it was called in her profession - and talk about the abuse. That would be quite a coup! Maybe someone would do it anonymously? Either way, it would take many weeks to get in touch with them, and the thought that such work could result in nothing was disheartening.

"What's worse," Sperre had said. What was worse than child abuse? Death, she thought. Just death. She looked at the list of the dead. No names she recognized there either. She stood up and picked up her computer, connected to the wireless network.

She went to Google and typed in the first name the list of those who had died. No matches. Next name. No hits. And so she continued. No hits. She typed in Inge Sorte. Hit! She clicked on the link and sat back on the sofa.

Inge Sorte was on the list of unsolved murders. She reached for her wine cup, absent-mindedly, her eyes fixed on the screen, reading.

"Inge Sorte (47 years old - born 1945) was found dead in the sea near Filtvedt on October 2, 1992. Sorte did not have a boat, and this, together with the fact that traces of drugs were found in Sorte's blood, led the police to view his death as suspicious. He had been dead for at least three days when he was found. Sorte was recently divorced and lived alone. He had no children."

That's all that was there. Kajsa scrolled down the page. Every unsolved murder case since 1975 was . She was about to take another sip of wine, but stopped halfway through. What the ...? A little further down the list were three more names that she recognized.

"Jørgen Henriksen (50 years old - born 1945) was found dead on October 26, 1995 in his home in Hakadal. The police believed that Henriksen knew the perpetrator, and that the perpetrator had been him for several days. Traces were also found of

large amounts of ketamine in the victim's blood, and the police believed he was drugged before he drowned in the bathtub. He was by a friend who came to visit for the weekend. Henriksen was recently divorced and lived alone. He left behind three adult children."

"Willy Nybø (72 years old - b. 1925) was found dead on November 11, 1997. Nybø was married, but was home alone because his wife was on a trip south with a friend. Nybø was only found when she returned home. He had been drugged and drowned in the swimming pool. The police assumed that the killer or killers had entered the home, possibly while Nybø was driving his wife to Fornebu. Nybø sustained injuries over time, probably for a couple of days, before he drowned. Nybø lived in a remote location in the Lomme valley. He had no children."

"Gudny Årvoll (72 years old - born 1927) was killed on the evening of

December 4 or the night of December 5, 1999. She had been to bingo in Stovner, near where she lived in a block of flats. There she had won a large amount of money. There were no signs of a break-in, and the police assumed that the perpetrator was an acquaintance of Årvoll and that she had let him in. Police initially thought the money was the motive for the murder, but it was found behind a kitchen drawer. The police gave no details about how the murder was carried out, leading to speculation in the media that the police were withholding information about specific circumstances surrounding the murder that only the killer could know. Gudny Årvoll left behind a grandchild."

A grandchild. Not a child? Kajsa retrieved a Barclay packet from the cupboard. She remembered the case now, it had received a lot of media coverage.

Just she lit the cigarette, Aksel stood in the doorway.

– Do you smoke?" he asked in an accusatory tone.

– "No," she said, blowing out the smoke and stubbing out the cigarette. She felt like a child who had been caught red-handed. Couldn't he just overlook something he didn't like? For once?

– The children are asleep, so you don't have to say goodnight, she said sourly, and

couldn't : - And there are freshly ironed shirts hanging in your closet.

– Why don't you try to be a little nice? For once in your ? He paused - "Don't you have any manners," he added sourly, echoing her thoughts about him. Kajsa sighed.

I can't take it, she thought. Why can't he just go to bed?

– What is ketamine? Kajsa took the most obvious thing to turn the conversation around.

Drugged down, she had thought as she read. The people killed were drugged, the only common denominator she found in the online reviews. But only in one case was ketamine mentioned.

– Ketamine? Where did you get it? Aksel's voice was both surprised and harsh. As if he was provoked by the question. Kajsa shuddered. What wrong had she said now, then?

– You said you weren't working on the murder case, you promised me ...

That's when she realized it. The double murder.

– "Sit down," she said. "I understand that you think it has something to do with your case. Actually, it doesn't. It's something else I'm working on.

Aksel looked at her, resigned, realizing that he had revealed more than he was willing to admit.

– ?" he asked, rubbing his eyes tiredly.

This time it was she who replied: "I can't talk about that.

He smiled a little at the recognition of his own words. "That's my line," he said with a wry smile.

– It's about the orphanage case I'm working on," she said and smiled.

– All right, then. Ketamine? He looked at her as if he didn't quite believe her. "Ketamine is the new media drug, as we call it. As a journalist, you should think about that," he said and sat down.

Kajsa brought him a blanket. - A glass of wine?

- I shouldn't, I'm working tomorrow too," he said.

– But ... a small one maybe, since it's Saturday. She picked up a glass for him and asked: - The media drug? What do you mean by that?

– Media creates trends, also in drug abuse.

– Okay. Tell me.

– Coverage in the mass media acts as a transmission route for new substances among drug addicts. The first reports about ketamine appeared in 1999, when the drug was entering the Norwegian drug market at full speed. Several substance abuse institutions in Eastern Norway confirmed that ketamine had gained a foothold in Norwegian youth environments where it is called K, kei or special kei. But ketamine has been in clinical use in Norway for over 30 years. Compared to other anesthetics, ketamine has the advantage that vital functions such as respiration, circulation and protective reflexes are not inhibited. That's why ketamine has been an important aid for pain relief and anesthesia.

– But it also has other sides?

– The downside of ketamine is primarily unpleasant psychological side effects such as hallucinations, perceptual disturbances and vivid dreams. But that is precisely why it used as a drug. Users have also described the effect as the brain being disconnected from the body. Some believe it has been
"hell". One man I've had for treatment described it as by far the worst thing he'd ever . He saw
"Dead bodies floating around in the air", i.e. a real "bad trip". The Oslo Public Safety Department, which has the best knowledge, has told us that ketamine can cause horrible flashbacks that can be even worse than a "bad trip".

– And this was used on the couple?" asked Kajsa.

Aksel said nothing.

– Okay. You don't have to answer," she said.

When Aksel had gone to bed, Kajsa searched for ketamine on Google and found several websites where young people described their

experiences with the use of the drug. One user wrote a "Tripprapport-Keta- min" on Norsk Freakforum - whatever that is - and used words like "enormously exciting and fun". "I realize less and less as I gradually merge with the mattress I'm lying on. I also feel my body moving away from my head. Not the whole body, but everything except the left arm the head rests on and from the neck upwards... All in all, some incredibly cool experiences," concludes the person's description of the ketamine high.

Just a minute after the description was posted onlinethe first response arrived. The list of people who responded was long, some sharing their own experiences with the drug and strongly recommending its use, others saying they wanted to give it a try and wondering where they could get hold of ketamine.

No one was negative. None.

On an English website, Kajsa found what she was really looking for: The dangers of using the drug. "Anxiety, hallucinations and a reduced sense of pain can make the user a danger to themselves and their surroundings. Ketamine is particularly dangerous in combination with alcohol, can affect breathing and heart function, can cause high blood pressure, can lead to panic attacks, and in high doses can cause nausea, vomiting and choking on your own vomit."

Norwegian Freak Forum. What on earth was that? She had never heard of anything like it. How easy it was for young people growing up to get an instruction manual for drug abuse - with accompanying hallelujahs about how incredibly good life could be if you just took drugs? Where were the police? Where was the Children's Aid Society? Where were the politicians? She had never heard any of them speak warmly about online surveillance of this kind. All the focus was on the danger of being exposed to pedophiles online. Why was no one focusing on this? Perhaps because it wasn't a criminal offense, because you have freedom of speech in this ! You can publish anything online. Without a filter. It was frightening.

What do I do now? Ketamine. Drugs. Double homicide. Orphanage

murder. What was this all ? Coincidences? Connections? Aksel would be angry and pissed off if he had the slightest idea that she was investigating the circumstances surrounding the double murder. On the other hand, it wasn't something she was working on, just something she had stumbled upon by chance.

Kajsa was known among her colleagues for being a petimeter. While most of the journalists in the newsroom had desks that allowed them to live up to the myth that journalists had "archive" in the form of stacks of old notes, coffee-stained documents and old newspapers, her desk was relatively tidy. She had a folder for all the cases she worked on, and all background conversations were written up in separate documents based on notes she made along the way. Here she also wrote down her own thoughts, not just what sources had actually told her.

In addition, she had her own system for registering/logging and editing particularly complicated cases that she worked on over a long period of time.

She had "invented" the system a few years ago when she made a long documentary about life behind the scenes at the Storting. She had thirty tapes, each thirty minutes long. The program was to be twenty-four minutes and fifty-six seconds long. She began with a large flipchart and sticky notes that could be moved around. After a short time, she got lost and completely lost track of scenes, people, statements, clip art, her own text and the whole shebang. That's when she got the idea: How about using a spreadsheet, getting it onto the computer, a little keystroke and she could watch the whole documentary. The editor was skeptical when she came up with "the new system". He was one of the best in Channel 4, she had never worked with him before, and he rejected the whole system before she had finished explaining it to him. But she had insisted that he at least give it a try.

– "Okay, we'll try, but this is weird," he said. After half an hour he said: "This is brilliant.

Now she printed out all the documents, which were notes from conversations she'd had with various people, both in the children's home case and in the double murder case. She read through all of them, but noticed that her thoughts were erratic and characterized by a lack of system. As an experiment, to try to get a better overview, she took out her spreadsheet system.

The horizontal line at the top of the sheet should contain a logical compilation of events and statements that together make up a story, such as a document. But it could just as easily be a life story, a football match, an experience, anything.

Then she made the vertical line. It contained many points in a chronological order, entered in accordance with when she had spoken to sources in the case. She knew from experience that many of these points would be irrelevant in the end. If she came to an end at all.

Under the heading DOBBELTDRAPET (DOUBLE MURDER), she wrote a lottery ticket straight down: Alfhild Godø, Jørgen Godø, police at the scene, Therese Bostad (the woman who reported the murder), Birte, Njål, Aksel (may the gods forbid that he should see this, she thought as she typed in his name), anonymous letters, the investigation team.

Behind each point she added additional information. Behind the couple she added: Killed, bestial, isolation, children. When she clicked on the box with the name, this information appeared. This is how she proceeded down the entire row.

Kajsa crotched her nose. This was a thin story: Alfhild and Jørgen Godø had been murdered in their own home. It was uncertain when. The murders were bestial. There was something special about the bodies. They had been drugged with ketamine. They had lived isolated from society. They had once had a child. They had a "past". She created a new document called "Unanswered Questions" - the double murder, and wrote what came to her mind: Why did they isolate themselves? Where did they come from? Who wrote the two anonymous letters to me? What does Njål know? Who did he see?

in the woods? How did he know they had been killed when I first spoke to him? What does Birte know? When did the child go missing? How were the murders carried out?

Kajsa read through what she had written. The police needed to know the answers to many of these questions. Aksel probably knew.

Aksel had brought his laptop home with him. She saw it on the living room table. Dear Kajsa, you really can't do that, she said to herself, concentrating on her own computer.

She created a new spreadsheet and entered information under the heading BARNEHJEM using the same list. Randomly, she entered Jakob Sperre, Henrik Kjelstad, Arne Slette- moen, Inge Sorte, Jørgen Henriksen, Willy Nybø and Gudny Årvoll, and behind each name she entered the information she had.

The story she uncovered was that Arne Slettemoen died during a trip with six orphanage boys. The police thought it was an accident, but could the children have contributed to his death? Were they getting rid of an abuser?

The other four murder cases were unsolved. According to Sperre, they were all abusers at orphanages, in one way or another. Like Slettemoen. And died - like Slettemoen. Now she knew what had bothered her after her meeting with Sperre, the feeling that he had said something she should have followed up on. "Some of the deaths are quite interesting." Now she knew what he had meant.

She created a new document and wrote down questions. Who were the six orphanage boys who had been together?

But with Slettemoen? Jakob Sperre was one of them, she was reasonably sure of that. It was consistent with what he had said, it was his "secret". Slettemoen was the leisure leader who abused him.

Could there be any connection between the murders of Inge Sorte, Jørgen Henriksen, Willy Nybø and Gudny Årvoll since they were all in Sperre's red box? Has anyone "punished them

that society did not punish"? Just as the boys had done with Slettemoen? Was that also one of Sperre's secrets? What did Sperre really know?

Kajsa went into the living room, plugged in her printer and printed out her two worksheets and notes. She sat for half an hour studying them. It was something she always used to do when she had set up such worksheets, immediately afterwards she sat with them this way and let her thoughts fly, gave her imagination free rein and noted by hand what she thought, the associations it gave her, on a sheet to it. When she looked at the sheet afterwards, there were two common denominators between the double murder and the other murders, two words she had written down: drugs (ketamine?) and children. She yawned. This was just nonsense. It was a complete coincidence that she was working on the orphanage case and then this double murder appeared at the same time, there was no logical connection.

Too many what, how, why and when. But in the midst of this chaos of questions, there was one thought that lay above all the others: What happened to Alfhild and Jørgen Godø's child?

He felt almost like a new person. For the first time in a long time, he woke up refreshed in the morning. Not every morning, but more often than before. His job had always been the most important thing in his life, it was where he was a whole and complete person, a person who accomplished something that mattered. His job had been his salvation, without it he would never have survived. But now it wasn't just something that was necessary to survive. He had always given his all at work, because it made him feel good. Now he felt that life had a different meaning too.

The bad dreams hadn't gone away, the memories came as they always had and caught up with him when he was asleep, when he couldn't control his brain. But he hadn't woken up from crying for a long time. Because Kajsa was there, in the dream with him, when someone hit him, she came and stopped it, when he sat in the closet, she came and opened the door, stroked his hair and held him.

him close to her. She smelled security, she smelled "nothing bad will happen to you".

His life had been like a barbell that was always crooked, with too much weight on one side. He had dreamed that one day his life would be in balance. That was why he had done what he had done.

It was simple really. He had two choices; either to bear the blame for what had happened to him, or to blame those who had decided how his life should be. He had chosen the latter, because they were the ones who had put all the bad things on one scale. Thus, as he saw it, he had no choice but to put them on trial for their deeds. He judged them guilty on all counts.

It would have helped. But not in the way he had intended. It had not in itself restored the balance. But it had nonetheless. If he hadn't carried out the last mission, he wouldn't have regained his composure. Because that was what had linked him to Kajsa. She came and added something new to the other scale, something big and heavy.

In the first dreams, the ones that were different from before, he had been a child again, and she had given him care and love, like an adult caregiver. The dreams were still like that most of the time, but lately he had met her as he was today. He had told her about all the pain, she had been the first to know who he was, what he was carrying, and she had looked at him with her brown eyes, held out her hand and cried for him.

To think that someone felt so strongly for him, with him. It was just a dream, but when he thought about it awake, he probably thought it would be like that if he really her. Many times a day he thought of her. It was so good to have her with him, she was like a guardian angel. Especially in the evenings, when he was alone and still had to fight the hatred, the bitterness, the rage over what people had done to him. When he thought about her until he calmed down.

His favorite thing to do was to stand by her terrace, when she sat there alone in the evening.

It had been by chance that he discovered that she used to do that. One evening he had driven to the place where she lived. The house was in a cul-de-sac, and he had turned around, driven back and continued on the road around the hill the house was on. He had ended up in a large parking lot by the sea. He couldn't see the house from there, but figured there must be a path from the lake up to it, a path that people in the area used to go down to the lake in the summer. And he was right. The path went through the forest and ended in the cul-de-sac by Kajsa's house. He turned off the path when he saw the house. It had a terrace overlooking the slope, and he had to climb the last bit until he reached the piles on which the terrace was built. Slowly he crawled upwards and looked over the edge into the large terrace. His heart skipped a beat and he quickly ducked. She was sitting on the terrace. It was the last thing on his mind. No one sat on the terrace at this time of year.

Slowly he raised his head again. Kajsa was sitting in a fur coat, with a blanket around her legs and a heat lamp on the wall. She was working on her computer, and he could see her face clearly in the glow of the screen.

He remained standing until she went inside. By then he was both limp and frozen, but it didn't matter. He smiled all the way to the car. He had found a way to get closer to her.

13

Kajsa's boss, Geir Hermansen, had received a tip that children with cancer were lying in the corridor at Ullevål University Hospital.

- "It's been a long time since the Minister of Health has had a run, maybe it's time?" he said at the morning meeting, handing Kajsa a sheet with a printout of an email.

It was from the mother of a ten-year-old girl with cancer. She explained that she had spent the last few days behind a screen while her daughter was receiving chemotherapy.

Kajsa called her after the meeting, and they agreed that she and a photographer could join them at the hospital during visiting hours. The mother was obviously an up-and-coming lady and had, on her own initiative, spoken to a doctor who was also willing to be interviewed. When she called him, all she got was an answering machine, but she left a message telling him what it was about and when she wanted to see Ingvild, as the ten-year-old was called.

Ingvild turned out to be a find for a television journalist; a charming troll with big eyes, a small stuffed nose and no hair, smiling and confident - and unusually good at speaking up for someone so small. - Am I going on TV? Cool!

The interview with her turned out brilliantly, and Kajsa clearly saw that she could use her as the main interviewee, the key element in the case. Usually it would be the parents or health professionals in such cases with children, but this girl was verbal enough to get the main role.

In the middle of the interview with her mother, Kajsa saw a figure standing at the edge of her field of vision. When she

was finished, it turned out to be the doctor she had been trying to reach.

- You're going to be a star now, I'm sure of it!" he said to Ingvild. – Give me five! The little girl slapped his hand. The doctor turned to her mother: "The tests are fine, this is going well. Then he shook Kajsa's hand. - And you're the journalist from Channel 4? Pete Howick, he introduced himself.

They did the interview with the doctor in his office. Kajsa noticed that he didn't have any pictures of his family, wife or children on his desk. She had been in many doctors' offices, they always had family pictures, especially of children bathing in the summer and a smiling, summer-tanned wife. Maybe he's married to the job, she thought as the photographer set up the equipment and they discussed where best to place them.

– "I've seen you many times on TV," said Howick.

– "Thank you," she replied, "I think you too.

– Hm ... He looked a little shy. - I like children. Children shouldn't be in pain. Ingvild has been in pain, but 's fine now. He explained that this was precisely why she had ended up in the hallway. She was among those who were best equipped to cope. - The worst ones aren't lying there.

– Is that an excuse?

Howick leaned over the desk, fixing his eyes on her.

– Absolutely not. No children, no patients, big or small, whatever their condition, should be lying in the corridor!" he said enthusiastically. Kajsa shook her head, "Not because it's too noisy there, because you have to pee on the bedpan while people rush past. But because it sends a signal that the patient is not prioritized, not among the important ones. Everyone is important, whether you're dying or going home the next day to live on!

The interview with Howick was an exceptionally clear message to politicians: "Our job is to save the lives of children with cancer, we must accept everyone. When we have to put some of them in the hallway,

it is the politicians' responsibility. They are the ones who must ensure that there is room for everyone who needs us! Not us.

Kajsa's boss was right. The Minister of Health was in over his head. He was asked to come into the studio and comment on the report live. The anchorman this evening was the channel's heavyweight, Tore Abrahamsen.

Abrahamsen had made it his trademark to go after people in power with a harshness that many journalists admired. He showed no mercy; he couldn't tolerate interviewees trying to evade his questions. He was like a ravenous wolf. His problem was that it sometimes got out of hand, it just seemed mean-spirited, and all he achieved was to create sympathy with the interview victims. Abrahamsen was completely deaf to criticism. On the contrary, he seemed to enjoy being as mean as possible - not just to the interviewees - he was also notorious for berating colleagues in a way that left many wondering what was wrong with him.

That evening, Abrahamsen was in his , driving the minister from pillar to post, not letting him off the hook by telling him that the government was of course aware of the situation and that many measures had already been implemented, things would soon get better, this was only temporary. In the end, Abrahamsen cornered the minister: "So you're satisfied with the situation, with what's been done?

– The measures that have been initiated ..., said the minister.

– But, interrupted Abrahamsen, - are you satisfied?

– It is of course necessary to continue working, but...

– But are you happy?" Abrahamsen insisted, "with children with cancer lying in the hallway.

– No, we can't say that we're satisfied...

– So you'not satisfied?

– Uh ... well, no, said the minister.

– Doesn't that mean you've done a bad job, since this is your responsibility?

– Well, said the minister, now the beads of sweat began to appear on his forehead. - We've done a lot and soon ...

– "Yes," interrupted Abrahamsen again, "you've explained that. The question is, since you're not satisfied, and since it's your responsibility, have you done too bad a job?

– Yes, of course it's my responsibility. I ...

– Thank you," Abrahamsen interrupted and turned to the other camera to continue the broadcast.

The next day, Howick called Kajsa, who was very pleased with the report. He said that the hospital management had scolded him for his lack of loyalty. "The Ministry probably called and scolded them first," he smiled. "So they had to scold me. Scolding has to be delegated, you know, but I don't care about that!" he said and laughed.

Howick was a doctor Kajsa could like: His touching care for his patients, his unquestionable ability to communicate with children, his fearless attitude towards those who held power over him. What's more, he probably had a lot of patients with stories that would make good reportage. A good contact for a journalist.

– Do you have other cases, some I can follow over time for example?" she asked.

– "I'll think about it," he replied. Goodbye, he said and disappeared.

Howick called her again the next day. He had asked the parents of an eight-year-old he had as a patient if they consider letting Kajsa follow her daughter's treatment.

– It may not be a happy thing, but I have a good feeling about it," he said, adding that Kajsa was able to record the whole thing on the same day.

She discussed it with Geir Hermansen, they considered whether it might be a documentary, but agreed to make reports as a serial on the news.

profile case, a case that people can relate , that is about ordinary people. There are plenty of politicians and Statoil bosses and the like in our broadcasts. This is exactly what we need to give the news a boost. Not to mention our website, we're going to get a lot of hits, we're simply going to make money out of it," he said enthusiastically. "Our own little sick news mascot! People will be glued to the screen and follow our own human-touch series!

Kajsa didn't say anything about the fact that the link between cancer and online revenue left an embarrassing taste in her mouth.

Kajsa was given the freedom to spend her time as she wished. "But you need to do more digging into these orphanage cases too, we need more good cases from all over the country, we need to describe their lives, away politicians!" Geir suggested. "We need to put pressure on Parliament and the government to do something. Give me some headline cases so the politicians can get their fingers out!

– But if this Sigrid, erm... doesn't survive, it's not impossible that it could become a documentary too," he added.

– So let's hope she's okay," Kajsa said seriously, fixing her eyes on her boss.

– Yes? Uh ... sure. Of course," he said.

For the next few days, Kajsa was busy recording little Sigrid and her family. She got to know her father Theo, her mother Signe, her grandmothers and grandfathers, and not least her sisters Andrea, seven, and Aurora, four.

It seemed like everyone was there all the time, there was a bit of chaos in the room - sometimes a myriad of aunts, uncles and cousins stopped by. But it created an unusual setting and a rich gallery of characters to draw from, not least because everyone was so unusually outgoing.

With her parents' consent, Kajsa had conversations with Howick, the attending physician, about how Sigrid was doing, and he always stopped by when she was there. The whole family seemed to have completely fallen in love with the doctor.

Kajsa noticed that his presence touched her too, and as she sat and watched him examine Sigrid, she thought: My father was like that. Just as dedicated. Just as warm.

One day, when she had an interview appointment with him, he didn't show up. His secretary came and said he was busy with a bad patient.

Later in the day, he called and apologized. "But if you want and have time, I can meet you and brief you today. I haven't had time for dinner, can we meet somewhere for a bite to eat?" he asked. "I'm almost done at work.

They agreed on Druen at Aker Brygge. It was

strange to meet him without a doctor's coat.

– "You look so thoughtful, what are you thinking about?" he said.

– Why did you become a doctor?" she asked.

– So that's what you were ?" he said and tasted the wine, rolling it around in his mouth. "Hm... not too bad," he said, raising his glass to the light and studying the color of the wine. "Why did I become a doctor? That's easy to answer: I've seen some children that nobody cared about, and I decided that I was going to save all the children in the world. His eyes were serious.

Kajsa wanted to ask more, but he raised his glass and toasted - "To Sigrid," he said. Silence fell between them, but it wasn't uncomfortable.

– Howick?" she said. "English?

– American father, he replied.

– Are you…

He interrupted her. "You're always the one who asks the questions," he said. He looked at her questioningly.

– Okay, she said and leaned back, putting her hands on the table. – Fire away!

– Why did you become a journalist?

– To change the world.

– Are you succeeding?

– A rare occasion.

– Will it last?

– Yes, that's enough.

– What are you working on now that could change the world?

Kajsa thought about it: - Outside of the situation for children with cancer? He nodded.

There was only one thing - the orphanage children.

– What about them?

She gave a background to where the case stood politically. He nodded with interest as she spoke.

– But what can you do?

– Tell their story, she said. - Tell everything.

– Everything?

– Personal stories, experiences of abuse, creating empathy, closeness to the story, confronting those responsible, pushing for the redress they deserve.

– The people responsible? And who are they?

– The government. Those who let it happen. Those who didn't care enough.

– The? The state? He smiled ironically. - Who is the state?

– Those who were supposed to follow, those who were responsible for the system. And the state must pay , give them proper redress. It's my job to make sure that they are seen, that their stories are heard, that there are consequences, that they are not fobbed off with small change.

– Redress? Can anything - or anyone - give them redress? These children, who today are no longer children, but adults with broken lives. Redress? What kind of word is that? Does it mean that all the hurt goes away?

She didn't answer, what could she say, he was right of course. They couldn't get their lives back, they had lost.

Howick spun the glass, following it with his eyes. He looked like he was lost in his own thoughts. She studied him. He looked sad.

She was overwhelmed by a desire to make him happy, to remove the heaviness that had settled over his face, the stiffness of the mocking movement of the glass. She leaned over the table.

What has become of the interviewer? Aren't you going to ask me more questions?

He rubbed his chin and smiled again.

– Tell me about yourself, he said.

– There's not much to tell.

– There's always something, every life is a lived story," he said, raising his glass in a toast.

– Yes.

– Children?

– Yes, two.

– Age?

– Four and soon to be seven.

– Nice age.

– Yes, and busy, she smiled.

– I imagine so, yes. He smiled back.

– You don't have one?

– Unfortunately, no, but I work a lot with children, I get attached to them for a long time.

– Your parents, are they alive?

– "No," he said seriously without meeting her gaze.

– Did you grow up in the US?

– Yes, and educated there. He looked past her, out of the window, at people passing by on Aker Brygge.

She studied him. She was surprised by his eyes. He was crying. He's sad, he misses his parents, he's carrying a grief, she thought as he turned to her again and smiled.

– Is that the journalist interviewing me? Weren't we going to talk about you? Tell me about your childhood, your upbringing.

Kajsa told us that she lived in Sunnmøre until she was ten years old.

– Can you speak Sunnmøre, then?" he said with a smile.

– Of course I can," she replies.

– Speak up, say something!

– Hm, what will it be?

– Pretend you're on TV and reporting. He eagerly leaned forward on the table and waited.

Kajsa ran her hand through her hair and looked directly at him, as if he were a camera, while holding her fork like a microphone: "We are now live from the Prime Minister's office. Just half an hour ago, a press conference was called, and he is expected here in the plenary hall in the government quarter in a few minutes. No one knows for sure what the reason for this urgent call is, but rumor has it that Kanal 4's revealing reports about the conditions for children with cancer have caused the Prime Minister to react and that he will make a happy announcement that the government is providing 20 million kroner in immediate measures.

– Brilliant! If only it were that good! Howick quietly clapped his hands. "But it's a bit strange, you become 'another person'," he said and laughed.

14

The woman who opened the door could be in her mid-twenties. She had a piercing in her nose and one eyebrow, and her eyes were heavily made up with thick lines of eyeliner along the lashes, both above and below, as well as on the waterline. Her hair was long, straight and dyed pitch black. Her clothes were also black: black trousers and - despite the fact that it was a warm spring day, the kind of day when you open windows and doors and let the air in - a long-sleeved black knitted sweater. It looked like she was cold.

– Who are you?" she said. The voice was dismissive.

Kajsa smiled gently, "I'm a journalist in ... That's as far as she got.

– Journalist? She took a step back and wanted to close the door.

Kajsa put her hand on the door and held it. - Wait a minute. Don't you want to hear what I want?

– "No," the woman replied, but she still didn't close the door.

– You're Ine-Marie, aren't you?" Kajsa hurried to ask.

– What do you want from me?

– Are you 's daughter?

– Why do you ask that?

Kajsa had found out that Gudny Årvoll's daughter was called Ida and that she had a daughter called Ine-Marie. She didn't quite know how to proceed with the woman at the door, and said: "I don't really know, your name has come up in a case I'm working on, so I just wanted to talk to you.

– Where do you work?

– Channel 4.

– TV?

– I have no plans to interview you on TV, I just want to talk to you in connection with some research I'm doing. But why don't we go inside and I can explain it to you? It won't take too long.

The entire black figure radiated reluctance; the posture, the facial expression, the hand with a firm grip on the door handle. Kajsa was therefore surprised when she slowly opened the door.

The apartment was exceptionally clean and tidy; not a thing was lying around, nothing was . In the hallway, five pairs of shoes were neatly placed next to each other, as if she had used a ruler. In the living room, there was a stack of newspapers on the table, neatly folded, with counting edges.

The living room was spartanly furnished with an old sofa, a table, a large armchair, a TV and a stereo system. On a small corner table next to the sofa were some CDs, placed exactly on top of each other. Heavy . On the windowsill stood a solitary plant, a pink cyclamen. From the living room, Kajsa looked into a small kitchen. She glimpsed some cans lined up on rails and some cereal in the same way. In a glass cabinet there were glasses and cups, all placed with millimeter precision.

Ine-Marie said nothing, just sat down in her chair. Kajsa sat down on the sofa. "Well, I don't know where to start," she said. "Perhaps you've heard the revelations about conditions in Norwegian orphanages?

Ine-Marie nodded.

– I know that your grandmother worked at several of these children's homes.

The woman on the sofa said nothing. Kajsa continued hesitantly.

– She ... She was killed three years ago?

– Yes, it does. But what does that have to do with me?

– I'm trying to figure out some ... uh ... things, and looking for

people who knew your grandmother and others who worked in children's homes.

– Acquaintances and acquaintances ... I had little contact with her until my mother died.

– Why is that?

– My mother didn't want to.

– Really? Why is that?

She got , opened a cupboard and took out a self-rolled cigarette, lit it and stood by the window with her back to Kajsa.

– And your mother?

– My mother killed herself when I was fourteen years old. I had to live with my grandmother. I left her as soon as I was old enough. Kajsa said nothing, watching the thin figure at the wine table. She held one arm around her, as if she were cold. There was something soft and vulnerable about the arch in the thin neck.

– "It's a long story," she continued without turning around.

– The murder of your grandmother has not been solved," she said tentatively when the young woman said nothing more.

– It doesn't matter," said Ine-Marie.

– Don't you want to know who did it? Why it happened?

– No, you don't.

– Why ...

Kajsa was interrupted."She got what she deserved," she said vehemently."It was her fault that my mother killed herself," she added calmly, turning to Kajsa."She destroyed my mother.

– How do you do it?

– It can be the same thing. That's just the way it is.

– What do you mean your mother was destroyed?

– She was a good mother and she was like her mother. She was two different people. In the end, she couldn't live with who she was, I think.

Ine-Marie sat down in the chair again. There was silence between them, but the woman's silence was no longer full of the same resistance as before. Kajsa said nothing, just waited, hoping

that she wanted to continue. Ine-Marie removed some tobacco from her tongue. Then she reached for the ashtray, the sleeve of her sweater pulled up slightly. Kajsa noticed that she had cut marks on her forearm. Ine-Marie sat looking at the cigarette as she rolled it between her thumb and forefinger.

– "My mother never talked about her childhood," she finally continued. "I didn't know anything about her childhood and growth until after she died. When I was going through her things, I found a diary she wrote when she was young. Ine-Marie took another drag on her cigarette, but didn't look at Kajsa. - That's when I realized why she locked me in the bedroom closet when she got angry with me. She took another drag on her cigarette, blowing the smoke calmly towards the ceiling. - That's what her mother had done to her. Only much worse. Afterwards, my mother used to regret it, then she'd cry and ask me to forgive her and take me for a walk in Frognerparken and buy ice cream. Ine-Marie looked up, met Kajsa's gaze, it was sad.

– Isn't that strange?" she said.

– What then?" asked Kajsa.

– You would think that a person who was abused as a child would never do the same to their own child - but that's exactly what happens. History repeats itself. The one who gets hit, hits.

Kajsa said nothing, clearly noticing now that Ine-Marie was no longer as reserved. Something fierce had come over her. She spoke faster, as if the words were being squeezed out of her, as if she was afraid they would stop coming or that she would change her mind and say no more. - It was when I found the diary that I understood for the first time who she was and why she had become the way she had; good one day and evil the next. It was as if she was trying to love me, but couldn't.

Directly opposite the entrance to Kanal 4 was a nice little café. Only once had he seen Kajsa at Kanal 4 when he drove past,

when he followed her to Nesodden. That's why he had started to stop by the café instead, sometimes in the morning before going to work, especially on days when he didn't start early. It also happened that he went there after work in the afternoon and evening. Sitting there had been fruitless until he found out how he could find out when she was working, what shifts she was on. It had been easy. He had called the desk at Kanal 4, introduced himself with a false name, said that he was a friend of Kajsa's, that he had tried to call her on her cell phone without getting an answer, and wondered if she was at work, what shift she was on.

It made everything much easier. He knew roughly when she was at work, and after that he had been able to observe her several times.

On this particular day, he knew that she worked until five o'clock. He'd been sitting in the café reading the papers for over an hour, thinking she'd probably left work before he arrived anyway. But when it was half past five and he was about to leave, she came out. He followed her at a good distance when she picked up the car, he knew where she parked. When she drove out of the parking garage, he followed her.

At Stovner, he sat in the car a short distance down the road and watched her walk over to an apartment building.

He waited for a moment before going over to the bells and examining the row of names. Årvoll. The name hit him like a fist, he couldn't breathe, he leaned against the wall. Ine-Marie Årvoll. Who was that?

He walked back to the car, grabbed the Imsdal bottle and took a long drink, taking some water in his hand and stroking his face. Ine-Marie Årvoll? Årvoll? Ida?

He squeezed his eyes tightly shut.

She was like a dream, running towards him, throwing herself around his neck. She smelled of summer, her skin was golden, warm, her dark brown hair covered his face, she pressed herself against him, he could feel her small breasts, he stroked her back, put his hand on the back of her neck, turned his face towards her.

her head towards him, met the look in her brown eyes, found her mouth, he was almost blown apart, his crotch throbbed as if his heart had moved down there, his whole body was one big muscle that lifted her up and spun her around until they were both dizzy and fell laughing into the soft hay in the barn. He wanted her, even if it was the last thing he ever did in his life, he wanted her. But she didn't want to. - You'll have to wait, she said. - Next year, maybe next year, when we'll be sixteen, then we can do it.

She drove him crazy.

He tried to protest, but she put a finger to his mouth. - And no one must know about us. When one knows, everyone knows, and thats the end of the good," she said.

He had kept his head above water for over two years. Two infinitely long years. He was losing his mind. He wanted her now!

It had been mid-winter when she came to him. That's how he thought of her: that she came to him, came to his rescue so that he was no longer cold.

The manager had said that they would get a new chef. He - Satan, as he called him - had not said that she had a daughter. They had therefore been very surprised - in fact, some of the boys had literally gaped when they saw Ida for the first . She was their own age. The boys at the boys' home weren't used to girls, and in the evenings more of them than him had defied the manager's admonition to "put their hands over the duvet" when they went to bed.

He had quickly realized that something was wrong. She never smiled. She always looked down. Almost always. Because he noticed that she looked at him sometimes, but when he looked at her, she drew her gaze to him.

He had loved her from the first moment. He had

never loved before.

Once, he had been ill for many days. He had been really sick with a high fever. At first he had just wanted someone who , someone with soft hands a cold cloth over his feverish face. He had been so happy to be on the chamber seat next to the kitchen.

net. He had thought that the chef had soft, warm hands. She didn't.

It was these days that he had realized it; that she was one of the bad guys.

She was angry with him when he couldn't eat the food she made, even though she could see that he was very ill, his mouth and throat were so dry that he could hardly speak, his body ached and he was drenched in sweat.

But that wasn't the worst of it; he saw up , heard through the crack in the door to the kitchen how she bossed Ida around. Nothing she did was good enough for her mother. It was as if Gudny couldn't stand her daughter, she was out to get her all the time, never a kind word to her.

One day, when Ida dropped something on the floor, she had fixed her up and sent her to her room. That was in the morning, and he neither saw nor heard Ida for the rest of the day. In the afternoon, when he started to feel better and Gudny was out running an errand, he had sneaked up to the attic where Ida and her mother had their room. Carefully and with his heart in his throat, he opened the door. At first he thought Ida wasn't there, the room was completely empty, but then he heard crying and realized the sound was coming from the wardrobe. He crept across the floor, whispered her name, carefully unlocked the closet door and there she sat with frightened eyes and her arms raised as if she expected the person who opened it to hit her.

It was then that he realized that she was just like him, that her mother was just like his had been.

He hadn't known what to say, just stared at her. She had looked at him with red-rimmed eyes and swollen cheeks. - Go, she had whispered. - You have to go before she sees you. When he didn't seem to budge, it was like his legs were glued shut, she pushed him hard. - You have to go, just go and lock up.

It was the worst thing he'd ever had to do, locking her up.

Just as he turned the key, he realized it was too late. Gudny was standing in the doorway, looking at him with cold, furious eyes.

The barn had been their meeting place for two years. He didn't think anyone knew about them, but he wasn't sure. In any case, he wasn't afraid, none of the boys would reveal anything, they were afraid of him, they had seen how he could take revenge.

On the last night before he left, he and Ida had snuck out at night and spent several hours together in the hay in the barn, until the sun turned the sky pink. She had cried because he was leaving, it made her weak and resigned, and he had taken her. She had begged him not to, she didn't want to, but he couldn't stop, couldn't hold back any longer, and in the end she had just lain perfectly still. She cried when he left her.

The next day he thought he could never see her again, never meet her eyes ever, after what he had done.

That was the day he realized for the first time that he had to make amends, not just for himself, but for Ida and for all the others who did not have the strength to do so. He would punish those who were not punished.

15

In recent days, Kajsa had tried to call Sperre several times, but there was no answer. After the main broadcast at 8pm, she tried again. It rang for a long time, and Kajsa was about to hang up when she heard Sperre's polite voice: "It's at Sperre's, go ahead." Kajsa only had time to say her name before he hung up.

Forbaska Sperre. Kajsa felt her anger grow, she hung up the phone and sat down to chat. What did Sperre think? That she was stupid? That she wouldn't his motives, that she wouldn't think that he must know more than he had said?

Her pity for Sperre was mixed with both exasperation and indignation. Okay, then. If he didn't want to talk to her, she would manage to find out about this anyway. But she shouldn't give up so easily, because there were several people here who knew more than they were saying. Kjelstad, for example.

Once again, it was the wife who answered the phone.

– "It's late," she replied to Kajsa's question about whether it was possible to drop by.

Kajsa heard someone saying something in the background.

– One moment, the wife said.

She could hear voices talking to each other, and then she was back. - "He says he wants to see you," she said with a sigh of relief. - "You can come then, but you can't stay long, he gets tired quickly, you know. Click! And then she was gone.

On her way to Nesodden, she picked up the mobile number of police sergeant Karsten Kjølås, who led the investigation into the double murder case.

When she worked as a crime journalist, Kjølås had been a source she kept in touch with. "Married to the job," he had said when, at the end of their first dinner, they became more private after sharing a bottle of wine and cognac with their coffee. Afterwards, they had ended up at Ryktebørsen, which was the watering hole of the time for media people - in the sense of people who were in the media, not just people who worked in the media. There they had drunk even more wine, and when he had asked her at four o'clock in the morning if she wanted to come home with him "my dog" with a crooked smileshe had almost said yes. This happened before she met Aksel, but she had still gone home to herself. She had one principle: Never one-night stands.

stand with a source.

The next day he had called her and invited her to dinner again. "Source dinner" he had said and laughed. She liked his laugh; deep, warm, confident.

– "You're the source," she had said and laughed, "I'm the one who's going to invite you.

– Oh dear, is that how it is? Then he had laughed again.

There had been many dinners over the years. She had never gone home with him. She had walked with him halfway once, but changed her mind and stopped a taxi. She had regretted it when she saw him disappear through the back window of the taxi. She had thought that he wasn't the type who was looking for "just sex".

Then she had met Aksel. Aksel had done something to her that no one else had been able to do. He brought out what no one else had been able to see, what she had carried with her from her teenage years and which had characterized her entire life and relationships with other people, what had prevented her from forming strong bonds with others, especially men.

Kajsa's father was from Ålesund, but had met her mother, who

was from Asker, while he was studying to be a doctor in Oslo. When they married, they had moved back to Sunnmøre, where her father got a job as a district doctor. But her mother had never settled there, and when Kajsa was ten years old, they moved to Asker and built a house on the property of Kajsa's grandparents. That's Kajsa and her two sisters grew up.

Her mother was a trained librarian, and when they moved back to Asker, she started working at the library. She also resumed her great interest in theater and appeared in several local productions and was an extra in a couple of feature films. She had been writing poems for many years, but had never done anything more with them. But just before her father died, she had her first collection of poems published.

Kajsa was the youngest of three sisters and the only one living at home when her father died.

He had suffered a cardiac arrest while on a ski trip to Asdøl pond. His mother reported him missing when he didn't come home in the evening, and he wasn't found until the next day. That day was the darkest day of Kajsa's life.

That was the day the security was gone.

She and her mother were standing at Solli when the Red Cross search team arrived with his dead body in a sledge. While many memories become vague, fuzzy snapshots over time, it was as if this experience became clearer, stronger as the years passed. When she thought about it, she could feel the cold against her face; it was an unusually cold winter with up to twenty degrees below zero that day. And she could still hear her mother's breakdown, feel the weight of her body collapsing against her, her voice calling out: Neiiiiii! Followed by a kind of animal howl.

Kajsa was only fifteen when it happened, but she was the strong one, the one who didn't break down, *couldn*'t break down, the one who repressed her feelings so as not make it worse for her mother. For months after her father's death, she was the one who had to do the housework and cooking, getting her mother out of bed every morning before she went to school.

Her grandparents had tried to help, but her mother didn't want them there. She just wanted Kajsa , and Kajsa had never known such loneliness as she had when she stepped into the role of mother for her own mother in many ways.

There had no room for her grief.

It had been good that she had had so much to do. It had taken all her strength, she had been exhausted every night, falling asleep quickly. And when her grandmother came to look at Kajsa with sad eyes, and occasionally tried to get Kajsa to talk about what had happened, Kajsa had turned away from her, even though all she wanted was to be little and sit on her grandmother's lap and feel her round arms around her. To feel her stroking her hair, to cry against her chest, to hear her say that everything would be all right again. But she thought that if she did that, she wouldn't be strong enough for both of them, her mother and herself.

Eventually her mother had improved, but by then it was too late. Kajsa felt no sorrow, only bitterness towards her father; the man who had made a living by making others well had not been able to save himself. How could he do this to them? To her? She who had been so close to him? Gradually, the bitterness became a great anger, a dark lump that settled at the bottom of her stomach and pressed her down.

And her mother never realized - or wanted to realize - that she was taking away Kajsa's opportunity to process her grief. When her mother began to function more or less normally, Kajsa continued to be strong for her when she needed it, she continued to be a mother to her mother. But inside, she was small and weak. No one could see that.

Until she met Aksel.

She was working as a crime journalist for Aftenposten, he was in the process of establishing himself as a well-known psychiatrist, and she interviewed him about what it was like to be an expert witness in court cases. Aksel was five years older than her. He was the first - and only - person she had told about father. He believed that she

held on to this anger as a defense against the grief she had never let go of.

Aksel had been there for her, coaxing her and forcing her not to close her eyes, but to feel the grief, the loss of her father, who was somewhere, hidden away. She had clung to him like a lifebuoy when the dam broke.

But she couldn't keep doing it. It had to end. And after a while, she also noticed that he became less concerned about it. Maybe he got tired of it, maybe he was just the psychiatrist who did the right thing professionally; not allowing her to cultivate her grief. So she stopped talking about it. He stopped asking. It was necessary, for her sake, for their sake. They couldn't build a relationship on such a foundation, where she was treated by him.

She pretended to be through it. But now she carried a grief that felt new and fresh.

She didn't Aksel. But she carried it with her every day. Gradually, she thought not only of her father's death, but of her own, of Aksel's, her mother's, her children's. Death became a shadow over her life.

She knew she couldn't go on like this, the shadow was hanging over everything and getting in the way of the joy of life. She ended up putting a lot of effort into not thinking about it, and the result was that she felt constantly tired. But she didn't succeed in chasing the shadow away, it continued to get in the way of many other things she experienced in life, other people, experiences and insights, but most of all it created in her a fear that something would happen; to herself, to her loved ones. It became particularly bad after she had children. She became afraid of falling ill and dying, not for herself, but for Aksel and the children to be left alone. She had learned that life was unpredictable, and that pain could be just around the corner.

It might therefore seem strange that she ended up working on murder cases. Because it was those cases that had drawn her to crime journalism - not petty crime, assault and robbery,

gang violence, rape or financial crime. But murder. When she worked on such cases, the shadow in her own life diminished, and she could think professionally and impersonally about death; it wasn't her father's, it wasn't her own, it wasn't her children's, it was the death of people who were none of her business. Murder cases involving gave her a distance from death that she did not otherwise have, and made her strangely lighter in spirit.

But she was just as anxious. Every day. The fear of something happening to her loved ones was planted in her through her mother's howl the day they came dragging her father out of the shoe.

She could be completely distraught if Anders went to a friend's house and she called to ask him to come home several hours later without anyone answering the phone. She would immediately assume the worst: that the friend's family wasn't home and that Anders had gone back home, that he'd been dragged a car or something like that, that someone had taken him with them, and that she hadn't discovered it until many hours had passed. That's why she used to follow him, not so that he saw it, because he had to be given the freedom to manage on his own, to be proud of mastering something on his own. But she followed him to make sure he went to his friend's house, to make sure he was where she thought he was. Often she would call after a couple of hours, on the pretext that Anders was probably hungry, to be absolutely sure that he was still there. After all, it was possible that he could be walking home without her , that someone had hurt him on the way, some big boys, a pedophile man could take him.

Aksel would certainly have given her a diagnosis if he knew how she thought, how far she went in monitoring Anders. That's why she never told him.

Most of all, she was afraid of being alone in the house. When Aksel and the children were rarely away and she was alone in the house at night, she used to sleep on the sofa in the living room. The house was

intrusive emptiness when there was no one there but her. She didn't dare look at herself in the mirror when she brushed her teeth, didn't dare meet her own gaze, because when she was alone, it was as if she became a stranger to herself. Then came the anxiety. It was a feeling of losing her identity, because she only knew who she was with people around her, and sometimes it was a terrifying feeling of being someone else. Anxiety was lurking all the time.

Aksel had sometimes joked that she had "a touch of ADHD" because she found it so difficult not to do anything, having to do something all the time. She laughed along, but felt crying. She could have told him about the restlessness in her body, the need to do something all the time, how her mother's ulcer and the image of her father's lifeless body in the sled followed her every day, to a greater or lesser extent. She couldn't tell him that she had found a peace of mind alone on the terrace that was inexplicable but necessary to keep her feet on the ground; a place where she could sit completely still, where it was good to be alone with herself.

She didn't tell Aksel any of this. She was afraid he would make her sick, he would probably start talking about post-traumatic stress disorder or something like that. She couldn't handle that.

Now, so many years later, she thought that what she had felt for Aksel might not have been a normal love affair? Perhaps it was more of a patient-psychiatrist relationship where they had interpreted the shared experience of meaning so much to each other - in different ways, admittedly - as different feelings than it really was? Because she had seen it in his eyes, when she finally put the pain of losing her father into words, that he felt he had succeeded.

No, she couldn't think like that. She remembered how they hadn't had enough of each other. Once. It seemed a very long time ago. Where had the passion gone? Where was the closeness now?

I'm running around like a fool to master everything: The job,

the children, the house, always something I should have done, something Aksel should have done.

She had him. He knew nothing about the grease layer on top of the kitchen cabinets.

She cleaned the toilet while the kids were in the bath, folded all the laundry that was lying around, while she occasionally washed their hair, picked up all the shit in the shower drain, she even cleaned the bench next to the toilet while sitting on the toilet, it was absolutely ridiculous. When he was in charge, he just sat on the edge of the bathtub and played with the kids. When he went to the toilet, he read the newspaper.

He was a good father. He should have been. He took the kids on Sunday walks in the woods and supported all the leisure activities they took part in. Now he had also started coaching Anders' soccer team. He always had time for that. He didn't have any important meetings then, he wasn't too tired.

She and Karsten Kjølås had continued their "source meddling" long after she met Aksel, until they got married and Aksel started working for the police. He had worked Karsten on several cases. It was she who should have taken the initiative to end the "relationship", but it was Karsten who did it. He gave no reason, just said: "We have to stop seeing each other", when they parted after dinner. She didn't ask him why. They both knew the answer.

It only rang once before he answered.

– Kjølås. The voice was formal.

– Hi there! It's Kajsa.

– Oh dear, he said.

She had thought about what to say: I'm sorry I'm running so late, but a colleague, who works in crime, fell ill tonight and asked me to make a check-in call to you. Instead, she said: "Uh... Source dinner?

– Yes, he just said.

– The usual place?

– Yes.

– Seven o'clock tomorrow?

– Okay, good. I'll make reservation.

– Okay. Bye bye!

She felt a slight tremor, like the warmth of a hand, settle over her chest.

Henrik Kjelstad stood by the large window with his binoculars. He had told her about them the last time she was there. It was from the war, bought from the Defense Disposal Project.

– "You can't find a pair of binoculars today," he said.

It stood on an old, worn stand, which really looked it was from the war. He leaned forward slightly and looked into it.

– What do you see?" Kajsa asked, walking up to him.

– Your house, he said.

– My house?

He looked at her. - I'm a policeman. Even though I'm a pensioner. I check people out. Now I know where you live. He chuckled. She looked at him, the long sinewy body, the white, well

you short-cropped hair. And those incredibly bright blue eyes.

– So ... what did you want to talk to me about?" he asked and went and sat down in the chair while holding out his hand towards the sofa.

– Inge Sorte, Jørgen Henriksen, Willy Nybø, Gudny År- voll," she said.

He squinted his eyes. She had seen him do it before. - What about them? he asked expressionlessly.

– Does it ring any bells?

– What kind of bells are you referring to?

– "Okay," she said, "let's start with whether you worked on these cases?

– Yes, he just said.

– So you remember them?

– Yes.

– Because there was a connection between them?

He sniffled again, took a sip of the coffee that his wife had once again served.

– They are all unsolved murder cases. That's why I remember them.

I remember all the cases I couldn't solve.

Kajsa waved her hand irritatedly, "But did you connect the cases to each other? Similarities?

– It is confidential.

– mean you've never told anyone? He smiled. -

Trick question.

Kajsa looked thoughtfully out of the window at the magnificent view of the fjord, where she knew her own home lay. Then she turned to him, holding his gaze.

– The common denominator is drugs. It was just a thought that struck her, right there and then, a shot in the dark. - Ketamine was used on several of the victims. There was no question mark behind it, she said it as if she was stating a fact, that it was something she knew. It was an exaggeration, to say the least. Ketamine was only mentioned in one of the cases, and in the case of Gudny Årvoll, she knew nothing about the cause of death at all. For a brief second, she seemed to catch a glimpse of astonishment in his eyes, but she couldn't be sure, just a glint in his eyes, his face not twitching a muscle. Perhaps that was what made her think that she had hit the nail on the head, because his facial expressions were unchanged, no sneeze over the bridge of his nose this time, as if he was rehearsed and unaffected.

Kajsa sighed resignedly and stood up. - I understand that you don't want to say anything. She handed him her card. - Call me if you change your mind.

– Why do you ask if we connected all these four cases to each other?" he said.

Kajsa looked thoughtfully at Kjelstad. He doesn't know there's a connection, she thought.

– "I know something you don't know," she said.

– What is ? Kjelstad squeaked.

– Do you think I'm going to give you information when you don't give me anything?" she asked dryly.

Kjelstad didn't answer, just continued to squint as he pressed his lips together.

– Unless...," she said and paused.

– What are you up to now?" he said, dipping a biscuit into his coffee.

– Everyone was drugged. The perpetrator had spent time with the victims. So you connected them to each other, but still failed to solve the cases. You were missing something that I know.

– And what is that?

– You first: Am I right? Is what I'm saying true?

Kjelstad groaned faintly and looked at her in exasperation.

– Okay, you're right. Drugs were used, and yes, they were probably abused over time. And yes, we think it may have been the same killer, but notice I say "may". We had no forensic evidence for that. The circumstances of the murders were similar, but there were only two of them that could be linked to each other because there was a point of contact between the victims. Okay? And now: Your turn. Spit it out!

– This is where you're wrong. All four had worked in children's homes or special schools.

– All of them?" he said, clearly surprised now. But ... Willy Nybø worked as a manager all his life, Gudny Årvoll as a chef. The other two had completely different jobs, different backgrounds. Sorte was a banker, Henriksen was an engineer, if I remember correctly.

– "I don't know what they did - or when," said Kajsa, "I just know that they were in orphanages or special schools in one way or another. Perhaps they were volunteers, perhaps they only worked in the system for short periods while they were studying, for example. Sorte and Henriksen were much younger than Nybø and Årvoll. What do I know?

– Hm ... Yes, what do you *know*? *How do* you know? He waved his arm, frowned and looked at her sternly. He looked very much like the brusque, difficult policeman he had once been. Kajsa smiled.

– Why are you smiling?" he barked.

– Because you look very much like yourself right now," she said. His face broke into a smile, but he had quickly

If you're right, we could be with a serial killer. A serial killer doesn't stop until he's caught. Be careful, Kajsa.

16

Wasn't the neckline a little too deep? Kajsa stood in the toilet at work and examined herself critically in the mirror. Damn it, why couldn't she be sexy? She pulled the black top down further, more cleavage, and grimaced at her own reflection.

It was still more than half an hour before she was due to meet Karsten Kjølås, and she decided to stop by 3 Brødre for a glass of wine. She could use it. He's a source, Kajsa, she thought, someone who gives you information, information, that'what you live on. She put on a deep red lipstick and went out. You have to meet people in order to do your job!

But her heart was pounding treacherously hard when she headed for Theatercaféen half an hour later. At the same time, she uplifted, a good feeling of ... of a kind of freedom. This is my life, she thought. I'm not just part of everyone else's life, I'm in the middle of my own life. I can live my life the way I want. I want to feel alive, feel strong, not just surf through life on the surface, gray, predictable, boring, I need something... something crazy, do something naughty. I want to feel seen, feel attractive and sexy, she thought, wanting to laugh out loud as she walked through Studenterlunden. I can live my life the way I want. As she crossed the street from the National Theater to Continen- tal, she spotted Karsten standing outside waiting for her. He raised his hand and smiled. She ran between two cars towards him, her stomach churning, a tingling sensation spreading through her body. "I'm like a teenager stealing out again.

through the window to meet a boy at night, she thought. It's absolutely pathetic, grown woman!

He knew that she worked until eight o'clock, but he had already been at the café at seven o'clock. Fortunately. Because just a few minutes later she had come out. She was wearing bright red lipstick, a turquoise shawl around her neck and a long gray coat. She wore bright colors.

First she stopped by 3 Brødre and had a glass of wine, then she ran through Studenterlunden.

They looked like a couple, a couple in love.

They had been given a table facing Stortingsgata. He stood on the other side of the street, outside the National Theater, and watched them.

It stung his chest to see her like this. He could relate the fact that she was married, it had happened before he came into her life. But not this.

He recognized the man from pictures in the newspaper: Karsten Kjøl- ås, the man who led the investigation into the double murder in Asker. Why was she meeting him? Why did she look so happy, so beautiful? When she raised her glass and smiled at Kjølås, he had to leave. They were going to sit there for a long time, he couldn't stand it, he had to come back. He pulled the hood of his sweater further forward over his face, dug his hands into his pockets and left.

It was as if time had stood still. The conversation went on and on, as if they were just continuing from the last time they had had dinner together. Karsten ordered Sancerre.

– Still the favorite?" he said questioningly.

Kajsa laughed: "Oh, you remember?

"I have the memory of an elephant," he laughed, indicating with a wave of his hand that the wine was approved and that the waiter could pour it for Kajsa.

– And what does that mean?" she smiled and raised her eyebrows, as if surprised.

– That means I remember everything. He smiled teasingly. - Everything, he repeated.

She pretended she didn't understand, they were acting out a play, where both knew the lines, both knew what lay beneath the words, everything had a reference to a time long ago.

– You shouldn't remember everything. You should only remember what's worth remembering," said Kajsa.

– I agree that. But you have to remember everything when everything is worth remembering.

Kajsa met his gaze. He smiled, there was a glint of humor in his eyes, but there was also a hint of something else. She was about to answer, but at the same time the waiter arrived with the starter.

– It was very good. Kajsa discreetly wiped her mouth with the napkin.

– Dessert or coffee and cognac? No, by the way, no answer. ? Isn't that right?

She laughed: - Right! Both, same procedure.

– Crème Brûlée?

– Correct again. You really do have the memory of an elephant!

– Exactly, he smiled.

When he had ordered the dessert, he looked at her questioningly: – Tickle dinner?

– Yes, tickle dinner.

– Who is the source?

– You. And me.

– How so?

– We both have something the other needs.

– And what do you have that I need?

– Since I'm the one who invited you, it's my prerogative to ask questions first, right?

– Hm, the good old Kajsa ... Ok then.

– What happened to the child?

Karsten looked at her in surprise. "The child?" he said.

– You ... do not play acting for me, I know about the child who was taken from them. I, uh...

He interrupted her, "Okay, of course I should have known better. The child. All right, then. And what do I get in return if I tell you about the child?

– I know something you need to know.

He looked at her thoughtfully. - Are you working on the case? I thought you'd given up crime journalism?

– That's right, I've quit, I'm not working on the double dragon. There's something else I've ... bumped into, another case I'm working on.

– Okay, but it's a problem.

– What is ?

– If I tell you about the child, can you promise to keep my mouth shut about it, at least for now.

– "Kanal 4 can't sit on this information for long, maybe we can manage to wait a couple of days. We will also publish the story from the war," she lied. It had become very easy to lie lately.

– Hm ... The war ... Karsten poked irritatedly at the tablecloth. - Bre- know you got ... you can't use it. You have to keep it to yourself, Kajsa.

– I'm not the one who knows, a colleague received a tip about it and investigated it. Strong story.

– Not good.

– Really?

– No, it's complicated, we need time. Can you wait a little longer, I understand that you want to be the first with these histories, but you're on your own. You can wait.

– "I'll try," Kajsa replied.

– And one more thing. He hesitated, but only for a few seconds: "Isn't this difficult for Aksel? That you know so much?

– Not as long as you know that he's not the one who has revealed anything. It just so happens that a colleague of mine has received a tip about what happened when the couple were young - *before* I received the letter.

"And Birte told me about the child. You can't me not share this information with my colleagues, you can't expect Kanal 4 to sit on these cases and do nothing.

– Okay, I'll take a chance and trust you. But then I assume that what you have for me is important?

– "I won't disappoint you," she said.

Half an hour later, he leaned back. - The investigation shows that the child is a "dead end". Literally. He smiled wryly at his own choice of words.

– Are you absolutely sure?

– Yes, we have information from the embassy in Cape . The boy fell overboard and was never found. His passport wasn't found at , he probably had it in his pocket and it was lost with him. The embassy sent us the list with the names of those who went ashore. We are looking for the other boy who was with him.

– The other boy?

– Yes, he signed on with someone else.

– So you're sure that the son of Alfhild and Jørgen is dead?

– Yes.

– What was his name?

– Arvid.

– Arvid Godø ... Kajsa tasted the name. - What a fate, what a life, she said sadly.

– Now it's your turn. What do you have for me?

– Njål, she said simply.

– Njål? What about him? Karsten leaned over the table with interest.

– He knows something. He hasn't told you everything. I think he saw the perpetrator.

Karsten formed his lips as if he was whistling. - What makes you think that?

Kajsa talked about the first time she met Njål, where-

than he had said: "They're dead, very dead" - how could he know?

– You had broadcast live from there that morning. He had probably watched on TV.

– No, he said he hadn't seen the TV broadcasts.

She also recounted what Njål had said after Karsten's questioning of him on the day Kajsa visited Njål and Birte, that he had seen a man in the forest. It could be the perpetrator. Njål could even have seen him go into the house.

– He's just so hard to get hold of, this Njål. I don't know how to get him to tell me what he might have seen," Karsten sighed dejectedly.

– He only talks to people he knows, those he feels safe with, not to a foreign police officer.

Karsten looked at her scrutinizingly. - You, he said. - You can ...

– No ... You don't mean .. I can't.

– Why wouldn't he? He knows you. No one needs to know that we've talked about it.

– Yes, but ... She interrupted herself, a thought taking shape.

Karsten looked at her expectantly.

– Okay, I can try, it may not work. But in that case ...

– Hey, don't you dare. I know that look on your face. What kind of payback do you want?

Kajsa laughed. Yes, he knew her, she liked it. - I want to know one thing: Did the murder show that the perpetrator knew the victims in any way?

Karsten added: "Well, we can't say that exactly. Kajsa thought about what the policeman who threw up had said:
"The way they were..."

– But there was something special about the bodies, some kind of signature the killer had left behind?

– If that was the case, I would never think of saying anything about it to a journalist. Now Karsten Kjølås looked like the strict and slightly arrogant police investigator he had a reputation for being.

Kajsa smiled.

– What? What are you smiling about?" he asked.

She wanted to say that he was great when he was like that, the way other journalists knew him, with his rough cop image. Instead, she said: "It suits you to look so arrogant.

His smile softened.

– Arrogant? Me? What a load of crap! But she looked at him and he knew what she meant. - Do you think I'm arrogant? he asked.

– Me? No, not me. I know you're as soft as butter.
Deep , she laughed at him with mock irony.

He leaned towards her, put his hand over hers and said: "For God's sake, don't tell anyone.

Kajsa chuckled, his touch had been light as a feather, but spread with weight from his hand to his whole body.

Then she raised her eyes and looked at him seriously: "But answer me this: Was the perpetrator in the house for a long time, perhaps several days, so long that he held the couple captive before killing them?

Karsten looked at her sharply. - Why do you ask that?

– Oh, so I hit the the head, she said.

Karsten spun the wine glass around on the table: "You know very well that I can't comment on such things.

But he a worried look on his face.

– What are you on the trail of?" he asked.

– "I don't know," she said honestly, "I really don't know. There's something missing and something connected, but I don't see the pattern, I'm missing ... what can I say ... the focal point.

– "Yes, that's a clear answer," he said. "Promise me you'll tell me if you come across anything important.

– "Yes, I will," she said, "but at the moment it's all a bit unclear to me. It's about something more, something other than your investigation.

– But be careful, promise me.

They picked up their clothes in the cloakroom and ran between the cars across the street from Continental. Karsten put his hand protectively over her lower back. They stopped on the other side. A thought had struck her: "What happened to Arvid after he was taken from his parents?

– Orphanage.

Kajsa felt the cold creeping under her coat. Orphanage. Of course. Arvid had ended up in an orphanage. She shivered in the cold wind and tightened the belt on her coat when they reached the downstairs corridor to the station at the National Theater. Something missing, something connected ...

– Are you cold?" he said, putting his hands on her shoulders and massaging her upper arms with gentle movements.

She met his gaze, it burned into hers. She wanted to lean into him, she wanted to feel... No, she interrupted the thought and pulled away. He let go of her, his arms hanging straight down, and he looked over her shoulder as if searching for something to fix his gaze on.

– "I'd better go," she said.

– Yes, I suppose so," he said without looking at her. "Maybe you'd like to meet the dog..." He said it in a joking tone, but his smile wasn't as mischievous as it used to be.

Kajsa raised a finger to his mouth. - Shh, she said.

He quickly grabbed her hand and pressed his index finger to his lips. Then he turned and left without looking back.

A man in a black hoodie stood in front of the National Theater building, his eyes fixed rigidly on Kajsa and Karsten. He clenched his fists in his pockets. He felt small, small as in the closet under the stairs in the dark. When Kajsa said goodbye to Karsten Kjølås,

the man walked briskly towards Vika, where he had parked his car.

Kajsa walked from the station to home, needing to clear her mind of both this and : Karsten's warm lips on her finger, her thoughts about what he had said. She had to get both the wine and Karsten out of her body, regain her sense of reality. As she walked, her thoughts churned around what she knew, urging herself to concentrate only on facts, not feelings, assumptions, intuition. Just hard facts.

The house was quiet when she got home. She peeked into the children's bedrooms, spread the duvets over them. This is my life, she thought. This is my life. Nothing else. I can't lose it.

Then she moved on to the next door, listening to Aksel's breathing that he was asleep. This is my life, she thought again. I have to hold on to this. I haven't done anything to take it away from me. I've had a source dinner, that's what journalists do. Nothing wrong with that.

She sat down on the terrace with her computer, found the box of cigars and lit one, which she placed in the ashtray. She didn't inhale, just sniffed the scent. Ah ... it smells like storks here, she thought and smiled.

As usual, she first went into Outlook and checked her email: A silly message from Hanne with little video clips of men making fools of themselves in the kitchen. A press release from SV attacking the government's environmental policy, and a message from Vidar Kvande. Surprise, she thought ironically, and opened it. Kvande sent her several emails a week. Mostly about the children in the orphanage, but also to invite her out. He didn't give up.

"Hi, Kajsa. The politicians are not to be trusted, they promise and lie. What about the orphanage audit? Shall we dinner, or...? Vidar."

She looked at the message thoughtfully. He was

should check the status of the investigation that the minister had promised to . She closed the message without replying, then opened the excel sheet with the title DOUBLE KILLED.

Here, she added Karsten Kjølås to the vertical row of sources and filled in the information she had received from him. There were three new points: Alfhild and Jørgen's son had been sent to an orphanage, and he was dead. In addition, there was another common point between the double murder and two of the child murders, at least as she interpreted Karsten's reaction: Time. The perpetrator had been with the victims for some time.

She printed out both the two excel sheets: DOUBLE DROP and CHILDHOOD. Then she opened a new Word document and typed: COMMON POINTS OR RANDOM MEETINGS?

- Suffering: The murdered had been together with the perpetrator for some time before the murders were carried out. Did the fan hold? The perpetrator knew the victims. How? Conclusion: PUNISHMENT.
- CHILDREN'S HOME: Those killed were on Jakob Sperre's list of abusers who worked in children's homes. The four people killed had worked in orphanages/special schools. The married couple in Asker had a child who ended up in an . Conclusion: CROSS-REFERENCE.
- DRUGS: The third and most tangible common point is the use of drugs when the murders were committed. The same type of drug, ketamine, was probably used on both the Godø couple and the other killers. Conclusion: SAME METHOD.

On a new, blank sheet of paper, she wrote five words and circled them: orphanage, suffering, punishment, drugs, murder.

She sat for a long time and just looked at the words. It was all connected. She remembered what Sperre had said: "When society doesn't punish those who should be punished, someone else might." Now she knew what he had meant, he had of course seen everything

what she now saw in the index box. What else did he know? Did he suspect who was behind it? Did the perpetrator or perpetrators exist in his green box? She would have to talk to him again, even if she had to break into his house.

It was a quiet evening, not a breath of wind. There were still large patches of snow on the lawn. Light rain began to drum on the roof. The first rain in months. It might snow, it might get cold again, but this was the first sign that winter would soon be over.

She pulled her legs up under her in the chair as the rain intensified. She loved the sound against the roof, the trickle in the gutters. She smiled contentedly into the darkness, and when the rain picked up and the trolls danced on the terrace railing, her smile grew even wider.

She thought of Karsten. There was something in what he had said that was connected to something else she knew, but she couldn't think of it. Her brain is foggy from the wine, she thought, go to bed and maybe you'll think of it tomorrow.

He was already parked at the station when she got off the train and saw her starting to walk home. He wanted to get out of the car, join her, as if they were two old acquaintances running into each other. Instead, he drove to 7-Eleven, bought coffee and a bag of buns, and drove to the parking lot by the lake.

It was dark, but he knew exactly where the path went, he knew it like the back of his hand now. It was good to walk there, safe, a place he was familiar with, felt a sense of belonging to.

Sometimes it had been a bumpy ride, but several times he had experienced the calm that being with her gave him.

He hoped she wasn't tired and would go straight to bed. He had to see her, see her sitting there alone. Then it would just be her and him. No one else. Just the two of them.

When he looked over the edge of the terrace he was disappointed, the

was empty, but he went under the terrace, sat perfectly still, as he was so good at, and waited. And when he heard a small knock on the terrace door, he took a deep breath and felt his heart beat a little harder. Carefully he stood up, peered through the gap between the railing and the terrace floor and saw her sit down on the sofa.

Again it struck him how strange it was to sit on the terrace in the middle of the night on such a cold evening. He liked it, liked that she did such strange things. You're weird, he thought and smiled.

He had been so disappointed in her this evening. It had hurt so much to see her sitting there flirting with Kjølås at Theatercaféen. She had really hurt him deeply. So deeply that he had felt a violent rage, a desire to pay her back, to give her a taste of what he could do when she did that to him. He really had to pull himself together not to think about it. But now those thoughts were gone. Now that he was standing here, and it was just her and him. He would never think of hurting her. Just as he was thinking this, the rain increased. He looked at Kajsa, who leaned back with a small, satisfied smile, which turned into an even bigger smile as she looked out into the air, straight at him. Imagine sitting like that, grinning in the rain, in the darkness by herself. Her whole body oozed well-being, joy of life. He smiled back. Sweetheart.

17

She lied too much. But only little white lies, she thought.

She had lied to Karsten about how Kanal 4 knew about the couple's past, and that they couldn't sit on either that story or the story about the child for very long. The truth was that she was the only one who knew about it. She had not yet spoken to anyone at Kanal 4 about what she knew.

She told Aksel the same lie: That one of the crime reporters had received a tip and found out had happened when Alfhild and Jørgen Godø were young. It had nothing to do with the letter she had received, she had insisted. The truth was that she had called the library in Giske and asked if they could help her find out if anyone called Alfhild and Jørgen Godø had lived there. They found Jørgen Godø, born in 1923, and a woman called Alfhild Godøy, born in 1925. "You can call Lars Brekke, what he doesn't know about local history isn't worth knowing," said the lady at the library. "Alfhild and Jørgen Godø, yes," said Brekke when she called and presented her case. "Alfhild's family name was Godøy, but she was married to Godø. "Yes, it's a special story," he said and told her what happened on Godøya during and after the war. Both "chose the wrong side" as he put it. - They couldn't stay here, he said.

She was telling Aksel the truth when she said that it was Birte who had told her about the child that was taken from them. As expected, he was apprehensive. - You can just try to make it

With your vote on anything to do with this murder case, I can see a long way for more assignments for the police.

She assured him that she would never dream of doing such a thing.

Karsten had called twice to ask if she had spoken to Njål. She had to admit that she hadn't gotten anywhere. Kajsa had visited Birte and Njål once after she met Karsten, but when Kajsa tried to approach Njål about what he had seen on the day of the murder, he became very agitated, started rocking and forth, chewed frantically on his thumb, became completely silent and stared in another direction.

She had taken him to a café so that they could be alone, so that Njål could get to know her better without his mother being present. Maybe he would talk more easily then, she had thought. She had refrained from asking him about Alfhild and Jørgen Godø and what had happened to them, just being with him. Njål loved going to Kaffebrenneriet in Asker and drinking cappuccino and eating biscuits with nuts and chocolate chips. Eventually, he talked a little more, although he rarely took the initiative.

On Saturday afternoon, she jogged around Semsvannet. On impulse, she drove past Birte and Njål on her way back. Njål was sitting on the stairs, as usual. She parked the car on the side of the road and got out.

– Are you coming for a jog, Njål?" she called out to him.

– Hay! Don't jog," he replied seriously.

– I was just kidding," she said, smiling as she walked towards him,

– but maybe you'd like to go for a walk with me, so you can be my guide, since you're so well known here?" she asked impulsively.

To her surprise, he stood up.

- "I'll get my jacket," he said and disappeared inside. A moment later he was back. "Let's go here," he said, strolling past her.

They walked down the side of Alfhild and Jørgen Godø's house.

Njål walked ahead in a big arc around the house and into the forest on the other side.

The sun was shining through the treetops. There were still large patches of snow on the slopes on the shadow side, but the sun had gotten a good grip in recent days. The path was wet and muddy, the thistle was disappearing and there was a smell of pine and rotten grass and leaves. They followed a small stream upwards and soon they were on a peak where they could see far beyond the landscape. They had a view of Birte and Njål's house, and they could see Alfhild and Jørgen's farm.

Kajsa pulled out a Kvikk Lunsj from her pocket and shared it with Njål.

– It'nice here," she said.

– Yes, he replied.

They sat quietly next to each other for a long .

– "I don't want to talk about Arvid," said Njål suddenly.

– Arvid? "No, Arvid is dead," Kajsa replied.

Njål didn't answer, just took another bite of the chocolate.

– Do you remember Arvid?" she asked lightly.

– Yes, he replied.

– How was Arvid, then?

No answer.

Kajsa looked at Njål. He showed no signs of the usual anxiety when they talked about anything to do with Alfhild and Jørgen Godø; he neither rocked nor chewed on his thumb. Perhaps it was because he felt safer out here in nature. It struck her that the conversation with Njål was like the radio program 20 questions with Knut Borge; the answers were often just yes or no. Perhaps she could make progress if she asked the right questions. Njål rarely said anything unprompted, she realized, but it was at least something that he answered her when he had previously been so unwilling to go into this.

They sat in silence for a while, Kajsa was afraid of pushing him too hard, that he would break down again.

– Was it on the other side of the pond that the man was standing? She held her breath.

– Yes," said Njål.

Okay, she thought, right question, yes/no question. I'll have to build carefully on what he said the last time he talked about the man at the pond.

– Was he standing perfectly still?

– Yes.

– Did you see his face? Kajsa held her breath.

– Yes.

– Have you seen him before?

– Yes.

– In the forest?

– Yes.

– Same day?

– Yes.

– Previously too?

– Yes.

– Many times?

– Yes.

– Did he go into the house?

– Yes.

– Who was he?

Njål did not

answer.

– Did you know

him? No response.

– Did you know him, Njål?" she asked again.

That's when Njål started chewing on his finger - I don't want to talk about Arvid.

– But Arvid is dead, Njål.

– "Arvid is dead," he repeated.

She had a cup of coffee with Birte afterwards. Every time she met Birte, she showed her gratitude to Kajsa for the help she had received from her when she fell ill.

You're a good person, Kajsa," she said.

It had been a month since Alfhild and Jørgen Godø were found dead, and Birte had almost stopped talking about the murder. Kajsa had dropped the subject the last few times she'd visited, even though she was eager to find out more about the couple - especially now that she knew more herself.

– "Hey Birte, can I ask you something?" she said.

– What is ?

– No ... I was just wondering ... Kajsa searched for the words, but found that the simplest and most direct was the best. - It was you who reported how Arvid was doing at home, wasn't it?

Birte looked out of the window for a long time. Then she finally said: "Yes, it was me. Oh, Kajsa, I'd rather not talk about it, but you had to realize it eventually. She sighed heavily, "I couldn't ... bear it any longer; knowing, year after year, how that child felt.

From the first time Birte saw the child - when he was a newborn - she had followed him. She had her daily walks with the children. It would be a lie to say that it was a coincidence; she couldn't ignore the fact that she was curious about this child who was suddenly there. But who wouldn't be, the circumstances, with this married couple who came here as newcomers and lived completely isolated from their neighbors, as if they were trying to make themselves invisible.

The first thing she noticed was that the child was lying in the , screaming and screaming, for a long time, without being noticed.

– I couldn't believe it was true. Once I stayed in the woods around their house for an hour, while the child cried and cried, without anyone being around. The father was out in the field working, so he probably didn't hear it, but the mother! Where was the mother? Eventually she came out and picked the child up hard from the wagon while scolding it. Then the child got bigger and the father built a sandpit just outside the stairs. Birte had thought

that it was good for the child. But it wasn't. Because Arvid - she didn't know his name at the time - sat there alone for hours, ever since he was so small that he could barely sit without support. As time passed, he stopped crying for long periods of time.

– I used to stand on the other side of the pond, where I had a good view and could watch. I heard him cry, often, for a long time. But then it was as if the little boy understood that it was no joke, so he just sat there, playing with some cars, building roads in the sand, driving the cars around. But he never hummed, like children do when they drive a car. He never hummed. At first, he chattered to himself a bit, but eventually he became completely silent. That's what was so frightening. He was completely silent.

When he was about three years old, he was given a tricycle that he rode around the courtyard. It was clear that he loved the bike, he sat on it late and early when Birte and the children came by. In the end, Birte didn't just go for one ride, but two, sometimes three times a day. She couldn't help it, she thought about this child all the time. It bothered her, and she thought a lot about what she should do. But it wasn't easy, she felt it was difficult to interfere with how her neighbors lived their lives, and besides, Hal- vor was against it.

– One day he fell off his bike and hurt himself. He was lying on his back and screaming. I waited, hoping that someone would come and comfort him, and when his mother came running, I felt relieved. But do you know what she did? Birte looked at Kajsa with pain in her eyes. - She didn't comfort him, she dragged him roughly into the house.

Birte clasped her hands - but I did nothing.

– When you tell me?" asked Kajsa.

– Arvid was about six years old at the time, I think. - Six years old! Imagine that! How could I stand to see this child for so long without doing anything? There is nothing I regret as much as

that I didn't tell you earlier. Birte took a deep breath. "That's because I haven't said anything about it," she said. "I haven't had the energy to talk about it.

– When I talked to Njål today, he seemed to remember Arvid. Why is that?

– One day, when Arvid was about four years old, he suddenly stood just outside our fence and watched Ingvald and Njål playing in the house stand.

Birte had seen him from the kitchen window and gone outside to ask if he wanted to come inside and play. At first he had just stood there without answering, then had hesitantly climbed over the fence. She'd made waffles and he'd sat at the table in the , eating and drinking currant juice them. He hadn't said a single word the whole time he was there, but the next day he came back.

– I can remember the first time he laughed. It's one of the most beautiful things I've ever heard.

Over time, he had also talked more, but never a lot, not the kind of chatter that children of that age do. Birte had noticed that he often had bruises on his face - "That's what happens, some children hit themselves all the time. But he didn't seem to be the kind of active child who falls a lot. So ... I wondered ...

– Did his parents know he was with you?

– No, I don't think so.

– What was it that made you report it?

– When he was six years old, something happened. Arvid was here, and Ing- vald and Njål were so hard, I had to step in between them. I was probably a bit heavy-handed, I grabbed them both hard in my arms and scolded them. But I stopped in mid-motion at the sight of Arvid.

– What did he do?

– He crouched down and held his arms above his head, as if he expected me to hit him. He didn't look at me, he just sat and waited for the blows, as if he thought it was ...

inevitable ... There was something ... resigned ... a child who came to terms with ... everything.

– How awful.

– Yes. Then I understood. I had to do something.

Kajsa and Birte sat there for a long time without saying anything more.

– I wonder what happened to him, Birte said thoughtfully at the end.

Kajsa felt the answer get stuck in her throat, but when she met Birte's gaze, she saw that she understood.

– Not so good?" said Birte.

– No, not so good. Arvid is dead.

She couldn't bear to tell her what had happened from the time he was taken from his parents until he died on a ship between Norway and South Africa. I once had a picture ... she said thoughtfully into the air, but I don't know where it might have gone.

– "In my room," said Njål and stopped rocking for a few seconds.

– Do you have it? Birte looked at him in surprise. - Where did you find it?

But Njål didn't answer.

– I see it?" asked Kajsa.

Njål got up without answering, and Kajsa followed him.

In his room, the picture was neatly lined up on a desk.

– Have you put it out now?" she asked.

Njål nodded.

- Hello! I'm home! Kajsa called out as she entered the front door, but got no answer. She took off her outerwear and looked into the living room. Aksel was standing there ironing clothes with his back to her.

- Wow, you're ironing laundry?

She got no answer. Then she noticed that he wearing earplugs. She sighed in resignation. On the phone as usual. But then she heard him humming and noticed that his head was nodding rhythmically, his upper body swaying. He was listening to music.

He was ironing one of her dresses, the bright red one in raw silk. Her immediate impulse was to rush forward, he was going to ruin it, use too much heat, what did he know about ironing, he didn't even iron his own shirts?

But at the same time, he lifted up the dress, held it in front of him and looked at the result. He was finished. The dress was smooth and fine, not at all ruined.

He's trying. He's trying as hard as he can, she thought. She stood and watched him.

Abruptly, he put one sleeve of the dress gently around his neck, then the other, held the dress close to him and began move around the living room floor.

Aksel danced with her dress. He rocked slowly back and forth, his eyes were closed, he took a few small steps, spun around several times while stroking his hand down the back of the dress.

He smiled, he looked happy.

Was he thinking about her?

He was here, in the middle of their living room floor; the satisfied, happy Aksel, the one she had fallen in love with. Not the one she saw; the distant, stressed, agitated, dissatisfied Aksel.

He was the Aksel who had been lost to her. Aksel immediately opened his eyes and met her gaze. He hurried to remove the dress from his body and took out his earplugs. - Hi, he said. The smile disappeared. He grabbed a coat hanger, hung up the dress and turned to face her, there was something expectant in his gaze.

Why did he stop smiling at the sight of her?

– "Hi," she replied. She walked up to him, stood right next to him, put her arms around him, leaned her head against his chest. - What are you listening to? she whispered.

He took the earplugs, handed her one, stuck the other in his ear, pressed his phone and pulled up the song.

"Now in Vienna there's ten pretty women There's a shoulder where Death comes to cry"

Aksel held her out from him, bowed slightly, stretched one hand towards her. She took it, he put the other around her waist, and she on his shoulder.

"Oh I want you, I want you, I want you On
a chair with a dead magazine"

She met his gaze, there was recognition there, and she knew he was thinking about the same thing as her; the very first dance they had danced. She smiled.

Now we have it, she thought. Proximity.

"In the cave at the tip of the lilly,
in some hallways where love's never been"

One of the things about Aksel that had surprised her the most, she didn't discover until they had been married for a year. Simply because they had never danced until they attended the wedding of one of Kajsa's friends. The bride and groom had chosen "Take this waltz" by Leonard Cohen as their bridal waltz, and Kajsa and Aksel had danced their very first dance together. To her surprise, he was an exceptionally good dancer. He told her that he had been ballroom dancing for many years, ever since he was six years old.

One, two, three, one, two, three, to the side, back. Aksel slowly led Kajsa to the waltz beat of the violin.

"Ay! Ay, ay, ay!"

He spun her around and around until she was completely dizzy.

She envisioned him dancing with her red dress in front of her.

"Take this waltz, take this waltz Take
its broken waist in your hand"

He pulled her , pressing his hand hard against her lower back. She responded by moving her hand from his shoulder to the hairline on his neck.

"This waltz, this waltz, this waltz, this waltz With its
very own breath of brandy and Death Dragging its
tail in the sea."

When Aksel had fallen asleep - he always fell asleep so easily - Kajsa got up. She couldn't sleep, Aksel's closeness felt like a warm, light contentment in her body.

She went out onto the terrace and took the picture Njål had given her with her. He had agreed to let her borrow it - just borrow, not give it to her, he had said.

A picture says more than words, Kajsa thought. Njål, Ingvald and Arvid were sitting at a camping table in Birte's garden. It was clearly summer, because everyone was wearing shorts and short-sleeved shirts. There were strawberries on the table. Ingvald made funny faces, and Njål smiled at the camera. He was missing a tooth in his upper jaw. Arvid sat with his mouth half open and looked towards the photographer. His face was serious.

Now, so many years later, when she knew what had happened, there was a tinge of pain in this moment that the camera had captured. Not only at Arvid's fate, but it was painful to see how Njål had been a perfectly normal little boy with a mischievous, carefree smile.

Her gaze wandered back to Arvid. The picture was in black and white, faded, but the faces were still clear. She could see that Arvid was about Njål's age. His face was handsome, with a straight, narrow nose, fairly large eyes and narrow lips.

18

Two days later, Kajsa told Geir Hermansen everything she knew about Alfhild and Jørgen Godø; the story of the war and the child that was taken from them in 1966.

She had expected him to be enthusiastic. Instead, he exclaimed: "Why the hell are you working on a double feature? I don't have the resources for politics, and then I discover that one of my most experienced reporters is working on another story that we already have three employees on, a story that has nothing to do with politics. What the hell is that?

Kajsa was completely perplexed by his reaction, she didn't know how to respond. - And what about your private life? Is your marriage going to hell now?" he added.

Her astonishment gave way to anger. "That's none of your business, is it?" she said. "But if you don't want the stuff, it's fine by me. I can tip off a friend at VG! She noticed herself that her voice was too high. She looked furiously at Geir, he'd been completely inedible lately, everyone got a beating when he was in a bad mood. They stood like two warriors facing each other in the middle of the floor in the political department. It had become quiet around them, everyone followed the scene with interest.

- "Aksel has nothing to with this," she hissed quietly.
- The neighbor told me about the child. And besides ... She a deep breath, - so ... I've received a letter, it could be from the , she said, and regretted it the second the words flew out of her mouth.

Geir just looked at her. - Into the office. His voice

was barely audible. He closed the door to his office and stood in front of her. - Tell me. Everything.

Kajsa told him about the letter she had received at home, and now she also told him about the letter she had received at work. She didn't know if it was really from the killer, either one letter or the other. - But the possibility is there, she had to admit. - The police have received both letters, but there were no fingerprints or other traces on them.

Geir wanted an honest answer to whether she had used her working hours to investigate the double murder, but she flatly lied. Again.

– I just made a phone call to someone I know in Sunn-Møre. He told me what happened during the war. And I've had some contact with your neighbor, Birte Kristiansen, she needed some help, and it was she who told me about the child Alfhild and Jørgen Godø once had," she said, feeling stupid. She hastened to add that she had contacted the head of the investigation, that they were aware that she knew this and that Kanal 4 would be reporting on both cases.

– "It's just a check-in phone, you know," said Geir. "We're sending a reporter to Ålesund to do the war story. *You* do the story about the child, but we'll get someone else to add their voice to it. We can't risk your marriage, can we?

Geir Hermansen was immediately in a great mood: "Both headline stories, two days after each other. When can we run them?

Afterwards, she sent an SMS to Karsten, notifying him that the first case would be sent two days later. It took him thirty seconds to reply: "Okay. Don't like it. But glad you let me know :)"

He knew she would find out. Finally. He had been waiting a long time. Last week, he had canceled a trip to a conference

abroad, just to follow the news broadcasts, so excited had he been to see if she would follow the lead he had given her. It wasn't her voice on the report, but of course she was the one behind it.

– "The police are now working on a new lead in connection with the double murder in Asker," said the news anchor. "According to what Kanal 4 has reason to believe, the solution to the murder mystery may lie in the couple's past. A story that goes all the way back to the war and is like something out of a novel: It contains infatuation, forbidden love and - the reporter paused - betrayal.

The report began with a pan across the open sea and inland. The reporter walked slowly towards the camera, with the barn on one side and the mountain on the other.

– "Alfhild and Jørgen Godø grew up here on Godøya outside Ålesund," he said. They lived not far from each other, their lives were characterized by harmony and security in families that lived off what the land and sea gave them. But then the war came and turned everything upside down. From then on, their lives are like something out of a war novel. It's about two people who ended up on the wrong side of the war and how their betrayal forever shattered their life's dreams.

It was a good report with several interviews with people on the island. In their Sunnmøre way, they were sober in their descriptions of Alfhild and Jørgen Godø, but the reporter painted with a broad brush the story of Alfhild as a German girl and Jørgen as the one who turned in several men involved in the Shetland traffic. Two fathers from the island were sent to Grini and later to Dachau. They never came back - "Yes, yes, they were a good match, Jørgen and Alfhild, you might say," said a man who was interviewed.

Alfhild and Jørgen started dating a few years after the war and were married in 1952. Jørgen had been in prison, while Alfhild had only been away for a few weeks, but had been deprived of the right to vote for ten years. - You know, there was no dignified place for two people who had done what they did, even though they were only young people at the time.

"Treason," the man added, pursing his lips. "Yes, yes, yes, that's what happened in the end, you know.

– Have you seen them in recent years, the reporter wanted to know.

– Have you seen them? No, I haven't seen them since they left here in the fifties. By the way, I don't think Alfhild was at home for her mother's funeral.

The reporter asked: "Do you think anyone would want to kill them?

– No one here has ever done that. You can be sure of that," he was told.

He listened intently to every word that was said. Now the whole of Norway knew what deceitful people they were. They had always had betrayal in them.

The next day, Kanal 4 aired the second case; about the child taken from Alfhild and Jørgen Godø in 1966. They used Birte and Njål's photo for all it was worth, which was quite a lot, because it was the only new photo they had. It was filmed at all possible angles, half close, close, total. In addition, Kajsa went to the back of the farm with a photographer who got to use all the creativity he rarely had time for in his daily news work. He used the most suggestive technique a photographer can use: He ran through the woods, walked across the meadow and up the stairs with the camera, so viewers would get the feeling that it was attached to the little boy's body as he made his way through the terrain. He also brought along a six or seven-year-old boy as an extra and used his hand to pet a horse, capturing images of his legs running. These images were shot in slow motion, in black and white, as cut-ins between sequences with a subjective camera and gave a touch of authenticity, as if they had been taken while Arvid was still living here on the farm.

Nothing he had ever seen on TV had made such a strong impression on him. The TV images conjured up snapshots so strong that he was right in the middle of them; he felt the linen air of summer against his skin, the warm, smooth coat of the horse against his hand, the smell of

the stable, the sound of the sheep bleating, the feeling of moss under his feet. He recognized the joy of all this, the sorrow of loss. He curled up on the couch, wrapped his arms around himself and cried silently. He couldn't stop, he cried and cried, until he thought: She's found me at last. It was bound to happen. Because even it was another reporter's voice, he knew it was Kajsa who had found him.

As he thought this, he felt the pain ease a little. She has found me.

He ran his hand slowly through his hair, over his forehead, brushed a finger over his lips.

The next day, the police called a press conference. As head of the investigation, Karsten Kjølås chaired the press conference. He began by saying that he had called the press conference to review where the case stood and to comment on information that had appeared in the media in recent days. Kajsa sat with Geir Hermansen in his office and watched the extra broadcast from the press conference.

Geir smiled happily at the sight of the large press turnout: "Ass-kickers!" he exclaimed happily. Ha!

Kajsa smiled too, but mostly because Karsten kept pulling at his tie knot, as if he was having trouble breathing. She knew he hated wearing a uniform. But it suits you very well, she thought.

Karsten Kjølås summarized: Alfhild and Jørgen Godø had lived isolated on the farm in Asker, very few people had had contact with them during the time they had lived there since 1958, with the exception of some casual workers who had worked on the farm for shorter periods, some craftsmen and the local grocer, otherwise there had been little or no contact between the couple and the local community - with one exception. In 1960, the couple had a son, and almost six years later the municipality received a report of concern. Child welfare services then visited the fami-

lien and a decision was made to take custody. The child grew up in an orphanage. The boy escaped from there when he almost 16, in 1976, together with another boy from the same institution, but fell overboard from the ship he was . There were no witnesses to the incident.

– This has been confirmed by the embassy in Cape , which was the first port of call after the drowning. The body was never found. for the other boy, Peder-André Høvik, we have recently received information about him. There are many indications that he died in London in 1989. His passport was found, along with some other belongings and a letter, on a bridge over the River Thames. We have reason to believe that this was a suicide. The body was not found; it was probably taken out to sea by the tide. This was reported to the Norwegian Embassy in London and then to the Norwegian authorities at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the CID.

Kjølås confirmed that they were still investigating the circumstances surrounding the couple's isolation from the outside world. It seemed that what happened during the war could be the closest explanation. The couple, who had not been a couple during the war, had grown up on the same island. Both had served their sentences and moved back to the local community afterwards, but left when they got married.

Afterwards, Karsten Kjølås was asked if he considered the couple's wartime history to be the most important lead, perhaps a motive, in the murder case. He replied that the police were still working broadly and keeping all options open, but that they did not "at this time" have any suspects.

Kajsa listened attentively to the journalists' questions and did what she used to do, even if she wasn't there herself; she tried to find out if there were questions that weren't being asked. Where was the story that wasn't being told? Was there something here that was missed, were there any gaps in the police's account? On this day, she couldn't find any questions about the investigation that weren't raised. But there were also...

Well, an untold story: The story of these two people's lives, especially the part about the war story. What had their lives been like during the war, after the war? What had they done? How had they found each other? Common fate, common comfort? Was it their shared experience of being ostracized that had caused them to isolate themselves?

Kanal 4 had already told the story, but it was in a report of two minutes and forty-five seconds. That limited what there was room to tell. She knew that Alfhild had a sister alive on Godøya. She hadn't wanted to talk to Kanal 4's reporter when he was there, and she hadn't volunteered for an interview anywhere else. Was it possible to get her to talk?

Sitting on the terrace in the evening, she depressed and tired.

What was she doing? Everything was just chaos in her head. How was she going to find time for everything?

Aksel had picked up the children, done his homework with Anders, cooked dinner and - wonder of wonders - put the piles of clean, folded laundry away in drawers and cupboards.

– Are you getting ?" she had asked.

– Well, I don't really know. It's difficult. But I've had a clear idea of the perpetrator's profile for a long time,he replied.

She looked through the window into the living room. Aksel's computer was on the table. She should have had his perpetrator profile. She scowled at the computer. "No, Kajsa, that's basically the same as cheating on Aksel, you can't do that. Pull yourself together, how far can you go?" she scolded herself.

19

Kajsa took the 14:50 flight to Ålesund two days later and landed with heavy turbulence at Vigra in pouring rain and eight degrees below zero. Both Geir Hermansen and the head of the documentary department had agreed that she could go to Godøya to do research with a view to making a documentary about Alfhild and Jørgen Godø.

As she stepped off the plane, she took a deep breath and let the salty air fill her lungs. She felt at home here, still remembering her childhood and the summers of her youth at the farm in Ålesund.

She picked up a rental car from AVIS and went straight to Lars Brekke, the local historian she had spoken to on the phone while researching the past of Alfhild and Jørgen Godø. He lived a stone's throw from the airport, and he, his wife and a bow dog awaited her with coffee and homemade Mor Monsen cake.

Lars Brekke was a man well into his twenties, with many words at a leisurely pace. It took an hour before they got as far as talking about what Kajsa had really come for. First, Brekke wanted to show off his knowledge and efforts to preserve local history.

He showed her the way down a basement staircase, which was so steep that Brekke had to walk backwards. The smell of an old house was obtrusive. The room he showed her inside was full of old objects, it was like a museum. There he pulled one book after another out of a bookshelf. They were books he had written himself on various topics from the com-

with titles such as *Giske in the Viking Age* and *Traces of the Ancestors*, as well as several books on fishing history; about boats and men, about the development and modernization of fishing methods. When he was well into his account of the importance of the purse seine to Sunnmøre, Kajsa began to wonder how long it would take before he got into what she was here for.

But eventually she was back in the brown leather sofa, Lars Brekke had sat down in the stress chair. "So you want to know more about the war," he said. "Yes, it's a sad chapter. There's a lot that can be said about it.

Kajsa imagined that he was about to begin a detailed history of the war on the Sunnmøre coast, and hurried to ask:

– Did you know Alfhild and Jørgen?

– No, they weren't older than me.

– What happened?

– As we talked about on the phone, it's not a beautiful story.

– Yes, but how did it all happen?

– Well, I think you need to talk to someone other than me.

– Really?

– Yes, I've spoken to her sister Alfhild, and she wasn't very willing, but you can visit her tomorrow. I don't want to be the one talking to journalists about things people want to forget. They can do that themselves, if they want.

Greta Godøy filled the entire doorway. She walked slowly ahead of Kajsa through the hallway and into the living room. Pushing the door handle with the walker made the rolls around her hips, upper arms and heavy breasts sag.

– Yes, please sit down," she said and nodded towards the sofa.

The living room was overfurnished, not a bookshelf or windowsill was without knick-knacks. Just like her grandmother's, she thought. She even recognized a porcelain lady on the television. She wore a white and light blue dress with a parasol in the same colors and a gold-colored chain that was a dog chain.

to a white poodle. In one of the windows stood an enormous cactus; mother-in-law's tongue.

The sofa was in cognac- and beige-colored chenille, three-seater and two-seater. On the corner table was a half-height lamp with a squiggly brass base and brown velvet shade. The walls were covered in off-white striped wallpaper, except for one, which had imitation mahogany paneling. One entire wall was covered by a dark, almost black bookcase with dark glass in the doors, illuminated by a recessed skylight. The living room looked like something out of an interior design magazine from the seventies.

The round table with recessed orange, beige and brown ceramic tiles was set for two. The coffee pot was ready, as was a platter of freshly made swallows and water pretzels.

– "Pretzels and swallows," Kajsa exclaimed, genuinely happy. Both because it gave her something nice to say, something set the tone, and because she was very fond of both the two Sunnmøre coffee specialties.

– Do you like it?" asked Greta, looking just as happy.

– Oh yes, I love it.

– It's very Sunnmøre ...

– Yes, but I'm also half Sunnmøring," Kajsa replied, smiling in her dialect.

– No, you don't say?

– My father was from Sunnmøring, I lived here until I was ten years old and spent all my vacations with my grandmother in Ålesund when she was alive.

– No, you' not.

Greta Godøy smiled, and Kajsa silently praised her pedigree. Perhaps this wasn't going to be as difficult as she had feared beforehand. In any case, she had acquired a good starting point.

– Yes, now you have to help yourself," said Greta as she moved with great effort from the walker to the chair.

– I can pour coffee, Kajsa offered.

– Yes, it's fine, you do it. With me it's not so much fun.

Kajsa wanted to get to the heart of the matter as quickly as , but she had so much knowledge about the Sunnmøre people that she knew it would have to take as long as it took. She realized where Greta was going with her self-promotion, so she asked politely: "Are your legs failing?

– Oh yes, the hips, I've had surgery on one, but it didn't close well, so the other will just have to stay. And now I'm so old that there's no point in repairing me.

– You're not that old, are you?" said Kajsa, giving her the line she wanted.

– Oh, I'll be seventy-six in the fall.

– ? I would never have believed it," said Kajsa. Greta smiled happily.

– Here, help yourself," she said, pushing the plate of swallows closer to Kajsa.

– They were the best kind of swallows, the kind my grandmother used to make," she said, and meant it.

– Yeah, I'm not that bad at making sausages, if I do say myself. She laughed a little to herself as she said it.

– You've proven that," Kajsa said and smiled back.

They both ate and drank coffee, and the only thing that broke the silence was an annoying cracking sound from Greta's dentures.

Kajsa waited, hoping that Greta would take the initiative to talk about her sister. She wasn't sure when Greta felt that the other talk was over.

With her mouth full of food, Greta pointed to an old rose-painted chest that stood just inside the living room door. She swallowed hard, but still had food in her mouth when she said: Can you get the album that's lying there?

Greta wiped her mouth and fingers with her napkin and began to turn the pages as she spoke. "When Lars Brekke called me, I just wanted to say no meeting you. But then he said something wise. She looked up from the pictures. "He said that someone must speak for the dead.

– What did he mean by that?

– Yes, not filled with TV and newspapers. She pointed to the Sunn-mortar newspaper on the living room table. "Convicted of treason," was the headline on the front page.

– Alfhild and Jørgen are portrayed as the worst traitors in this . It'not right. It has never been right. There'another story, which is - at least - just as true. Here! She held out a picture. - Here is the picture I want to show you. She pointed to a young woman who was leaning against a pitchfork with a horse in the background. The woman was laughing at the photographer, her head held in place with a hair clip, her long, blonde hair waving around her face, as if she was moving quickly at the moment the picture was taken. She wore a white short-sleeved blouse and a knee-length, wide, floral skirt. Although the photograph was in black and white, you could see that her skin was golden brown.

– That's how she was. Just like that. Happy, pretty, said Greta. - Happy, she repeated, - always so exuberantly happy.

– Were you close to each other?

Greta Godøy said that the two sisters had had a very close relationship. They were barely a year apart, and Alfhild was the eldest.

– We shared a room, and I was the only one who knew she was sneaking out at night.

– To meet ...

– To meet Otto, yes.

– So you knew ...

– That she fell in love with Otto? Oh yes. I told her that nothing good would come of it, but she didn't listen to me. She was completely lost in him.

"Here," she said, handing Kajsa a faded passport photo, "this is Otto.

The picture showed a young man in a German uniform. He smiled cautiously, he looked modest, kind eyes.

– Otto was a very nice young man, not one of those brash handsome guys," says Greta, "and he was kind. He wrote

letter home to his mother every day, like a diary, which he sent to Germany at regular intervals. He was very worried about his family. If he had been able to choose, he would never have gone to war, that's for sure.

– Did your parents know about the relationship?

– Oh, no, I wish I knew. I didn't help her hide it. What else could I do? My parents would be if they found out. My father was a member of the resistance movement, he helped refugees on the Shetland traffic. They came here, and then he transported them further south, to Herøy, where they were taken to England. Yes, we didn't know what he was doing during the war, physically afterwards, but we understood that it was something. No, my parents didn't know anything before ... not until she ... became pregnant.

Kajsa had just taken a sip of coffee and was literally about to choke on it. - Gr... pregnant?

– Yes, we got a good one.

– A boy? Kajsa's voice was barely audible. - Did she have a boy? When did she have a boy?

– May 13, 1944. I remember it like it was yesterday.

– What ... what happened to the boy?

– He got some.

Otto had been ordered away from Norway, and Alfhild found out that she was pregnant after he had left.

– Above. Greta turned the page again and pointed to a yellowed page from Sunnmørsposten. Greta's finger pointed to an advertisement sandwiched between ads for kittens and firewood for sale, under the heading "Miscellaneous": "Are there any kind people who want to take an unnamed good child as their own? Bill. Mrk. 736."

It was Alfhild's father who had placed the ad and who, a few days later, took the child and left. No one was told where he was going.

– Ho Alfhild grieved so much that we thought she was going to die. Greta's lips trembled. - I think about the child every day, every

what became of him, how did he get it, were they kind to him when he arrived, is he alive today?

Alfhild received a few letters from Otto, right up until the boy was born, and then everything went quiet. He was sent to the Eastern Front, and Alfhild eventually realized that Otto must be dead. "She was inconsolable, she refused to eat, and in the end she was just skin and bones and was admitted to the nuthouse at Oppdøl, or psychiatric, as it is called today.

Greta said that when peace came, just under a year after the child was born, things got even worse for Alfhild. She was labeled a German whore and sent to an internment camp in Kongsvinger. However, she was in such a poor condition that she was hospitalized again, and afterwards she was sent home to her parents. She was deprived of the right to vote for ten years.

– It was such a shame for the family that it was impossible to prepare, especially for his father, a resistance fighter with a daughter who was a German girl.

The father never mentioned the child with a single word for the rest of his life. It was as if it hadn't happened, but it lay like a heavy, clammy shutter over the family for all those years. The sight of the sick Alfhild reminded them every day of what they didn't talk about. Alfhild isolated herself from people; when people came to visit, she went to her room.

– Today it is unthinkable what these women had to go through. Alfhild's only crime was that she in love. Greta's voice was filled with bitterness.

– And Jørgen?

– Jørgen spent a long time in prison, he was convicted of treason for giving information to the Germans.

– Yes, I know that, but what were the details around this.

– Jørgen was only a young man during the war, just like Alfhild. But he made a mistake. He had a lot of contact with the Germans at Vigra.

– How to contact us?

– He used to go there to play football with them. The

developed into him getting hold of goods from the Germans, cigarettes and coffee and things like that. Everyone knew that they could buy such things from Jørgen. Outwardly, they condemned him for this "trade", but there were many who bought from him.

– But it's a long way from trading with the Germans to being convicted of treason?

Greta said that when the war ended, a large-scale hunt was launched to find out who had worked as informants for the Germans during the war, not just here on the island, but throughout the region. On Godøya, it was the Germans' revelation of a transport of refugees to Shetland in 1942 that particularly concerned people. Two men from the island had been taken by the Germans. They never returned from the German concentration camp Dachau, and after the crisis, their families, indeed everyone on the island, wanted to know what had happened. They wanted revenge. Many people had suspected Jørgen because he spent so much time with the Germans, and when the war was over, their suspicions were raised again.

– I don't know how it , how they got him to confess, but he , and then the case was considered solved.

– But how did Jørgen get hold of information about Shetland traffic?

– His father was a member of the resistance movement, and it was said that he overheard conversations about what was planned.

– But, do I sense a but here?

Greta looked at Kajsa thoughtfully. Then she said: "I knew Jørgen as a real guy. But ... you can never know ... I just don't understand it.

– What happened after the war, with Alfhild and Jørgen?

Greta explained that Jørgen's father died while Jørgen was in prison, and Jørgen learned that his father had transferred the farm to Jørgen's younger brother. Jørgen had been disinherited. But he was only interested in farming, and after serving his sentence, he took an agricultural course at Sem in Asker. It wasn't until several years after the war that he came to visit his mother, who was still alive and living on the farm. It is rumored in the village that

he had a terrible argument with his brother, and someone passing by on the road had heard Jørgen shout that he innocent. But no-one believed it - so there had to be someone else who was guilty here in the local community," said Greta.

– What do you think?

– It'not good to know. But if he wasn't guilty, why did he confess? Alfhild thought he was innocent, she said she knew who was guilty, and that Jørgen had served his sentence so that someone else would go free.

– Who then?

– She never said that.

– But Alfhild and Jørgen did meet each other. Here on the island?

– Yes, Jørgen was often at home visiting his mother. I don't know how they met each other, but we noticed that something had happened. Alfhild got better, started eating again, and although she didn't exactly seem happy, she was lighter in spirit.

One day she had said she was going to marry Jørgen and move away. Her father had gotten up from the dinner table and walked out without a word, while her mother burst into tears. - With a traitor, she had sniffed. Alfhild had stood up with anger they had never seen before. She had said that her mother didn't need to worry about getting ready for the wedding, and besides, she would never show her face on the island again. Then she had gone up to her room, packed a suitcase and left.

– I'll never forget it. She looked so small standing out in the hallway with her coat on and her big suitcase. We held each other, and I could feel her trembling. She was going to travel far away, she hadn't been outside the gate for many years. I think she was scared. Scared and angry and completely devastated.

Greta made no attempt to hide her tears any longer. She pressed her handkerchief to her eyes.

Kajsa stood up and walked over to the window, looked out over the fjord, towards Ålesund, imagined the woman with the suitcase leaving her parents, her sister, her home and the island.

She turned to Greta, "Did she ever come back?" "Yes, when my mother died in 1959, she came to the funeral. Greta drew in her breath in small gasps and exhaled heavily.

for her if she didn't come.

– Why is that?

– No one talked to her, no one tolerated her. Well, except not then.

– What about your father?

– No, he barely looked at her. But she didn't let that bother her. She stood right at the front of the grave with the rest of us, and when the priest had finished, she walked up to the coffin and placed a rough rose on top. It was as if everyone was holding their breath when she did it, there wasn't a sound, just her footsteps, the rose that was placed on her mother's coffin. Everyone followed her with their eyes, it was more like a little play, and I thought she had planned it that way. Because do you know what she did?

– "No," Kajsa whispered.

– She nodded deeply, bowed her head, put her fingers to her lips in a kiss before touching the coffin. Then she stood up, stood still for a few seconds, craned her neck and walked away with her head held high, between the entire funeral procession. Everyone looked down, but they turned and looked after her as she left. Father too. But he never talked about it as long as he lived, never mentioned her name.

– But you talked to her?

– Yes.

– How was she ?

– It's hard to say, but she seemed bitter, and then she said she was going to find the boy who was taken away from her.

For the first few years, Greta and Alfhild kept in touch through letters, but as time went on, the interval between each time she heard from Alfhild became longer and longer. The last letter Greta received was in 1961. "I thought at my mother's funeral - when I saw how strong she was - that she was going to be fine, that things would work out.

No. But when I got the letter, I was very worried. Mostly for the boy.

– How so?

– She didn't write it directly, but I understood that there was a problem. I didn't read it between the lines. She wrote something like that she was thinking about the good thing her father took from her and that he took all the love she had with him, so she had nothing left. Greta's eldest son had started studying in Oslo in 1971, and once when she was visiting him, she found the farm in Asker where Alfhild and Jørgen lived. They had not phone, so she had arrived unannounced early one evening.

– "I wish I hadn't gone there," said Greta. "It was ... just sad.

– Did she find son she gave birth to during the war?

– We don't know.

– Did she say anything about Arvid?

– Nothing at all.

Greta didn't want to be interviewed on TV, but she wanted Kajsa to tell the story of Alfhild and Jørgen. Kajsa tried persuade her that it would be difficult without her participation, but Greta was adamant. However, she agreed that Kajsa could take the photo album with her and that Lars Brekke, who knew the story well, could comment.

Kajsa's brain was working at full speed when she drove away from Greta Godøy. It was a strong story, but could it be good enough without Greta? It was without a doubt a weakness. Besides, she had no one from Jørgen's family. Jørgen's brother, who took over the farm, was the only surviving member of his family, but he lived in a nursing home and would be impossible to get anything useful out of, as Greta said. She consoled herself with the fact that she had the photos, there were many of Alfhild there, from when she was little. And in addition, she had the picture of Otto, the ad in Sunn- mørsposten and the wedding picture of Alfhild and Jørgen, which Alfhild had sent to Greta. That was something.

After a short distance, she saw the sign for Alnes, the small village on the other side of the large mountain on Godøya. Like a gut, Alnes stretches out into the sea, from the settlement itself under the big mountain and out to Alnes lighthouse. Kajsa followed a shooting and turned off.

Alnes had to be one of the most beautiful places on the entire Sunn mør coast, with its face turned towards the sea, open, harsh, picturesque. This day was cold, and the northwest was blowing straight in, it had blown up strongly while she had been with Greta. The sea was big and heavy, and the northwest grabbed her when she got out the car. The wind was at her back on the way up to the lighthouse.

When she was little, her father used to take her out to sea on stormy days. Now she did something she hadn't done for years: She unzipped her duvet jacket, stuck her hands in her pockets, pulled her coat away from her body, and let the wind fill "the wings". Oh yes, the wind was strong enough on this day, strong enough for her to lean against it, as she and her father had done together so many times. It was as if he was standing there beside her.

She thought about the relationship between Alfhild and her father.

My father would never have pushed me away, no matter what I had done, she thought. Then she leaned against the wind.

20

– Shit! Didden hung up the phone.

– What is it?" Kajsa asked calmly, she was used to this kind of outburst from Didden, who was going to edit the documentary "The Secret of the Murdered". He was an impatient man.

– The music for the opening sequence was supposed to be ready today, but now it's been delayed. I can't start editing until I have the music, I have to have the rhythm in my body, dammit!

Didrik Steffensen, known as Didden, and Kajsa had been given one week to edit the documentary. Didden thought this was completely irresponsible; he needed at least three weeks to "make a movie, not a work of art", as he put it.

Five weeks had passed since the murder, and the head of the documentary department wanted it to air while the case was still fresh and high on the media's agenda. "We have to show that we can turn around and make brand new documentaries, that we are in the middle of the news," he said.

This meant that Kajsa and Didden had to spend both night and day to finish.

The thought of Jakob Sperre had almost disappeared while working on the documentary. But as she sat in the dark editing room working with Didden, it returned with renewed vigor.

An hour could pass between each time she and Did- den talked, when he got so far in the editing process that he showed her what he had done. She therefore took out

the computer and clicked on the excel sheets DOBBELTDRAPET and BARNEHJEM. She carefully read through what she had entered. "What does Sperre know?" she wrote on the sheet in front of her.

Kajsa looked at the clock. It was half past ten. Didden just grunted when she asked if it was okay for her to go out for an hour.

She turned off Vækerøveien, into Lyseveien, until she saw the large sign with LYSE TERRASSE in Hoffsjef Løvenskiolds vei, turned left around the entire condominium until she saw the sign for numbers 37 and 39 at the top. There were a few parking spaces by some garages. She stayed in the car for a while. There was little point in going and ringing the doorbell. Sperre was unlikely to open the door for her, as dismissive as he had been.

She tried to be analytical, but her head was just chaos. It was Sperre's information and story about his children...
judgment and upbringing that had made her see the outline of a connection between all the orphanage murders, from Arne Slettemoen to the other four. It was he who had asked her to dig this up, and she felt that she was even more irritated, even angry, because he had known, at least assumed, the connection when he gave her his material. Why hadn't he gone to the police with it, why would he use her. Yes, that's right, use her - without him wanting to talk to her afterwards, without giving her answers when she needed his help.

The thought came suddenly out of nowhere. Why hadn't she thought of it before? Maybe Sperre knew Arvid Godø? Was Arvid Godø one of the Gang? Had he been on the excursion with Arne Slettemoen? Was the connection much stronger than she had thought?

Encouraged by these new thoughts, she resolutely stepped out of the car, past block number 37, followed a path further along block
39. Sperre's apartment was at the top; she could see that the lights were on in the windows facing the path. She walked back to the entrance.

the upstairs hallway door and peeked in through the window by the door. An elderly lady was on her way down the stairs. When she opened the door to leave, Kajsa pretended to be talking on the intercom: "Yes, fine, I'll come up," she said, smiling at the lady as she passed her.

Jakob Sperre opened the door - "I told you there was no point in contacting me," he said angrily at the sight of her.

– Did you know Arvid Godø?" Kajsa asked, pushing the door and slipping past him.

– I told you ... He didn't have time to say more before Kajsa interrupted him.

– Sure, I know you don't want to name other orphanage children, but this is important.

Sperre just looked at her and clamped his mouth shut.

– "Arvid Godø was the son of the couple in Asker who were killed," she said.

Sperre did not answer. He stood cross-legged on the floor with his arms crossed. - Arvid is dead, he said.

That's when she realized that he had already told her about Arvid Godø. She should have realized it a long time ago, made the connection when Karsten told her that Alfhild and Jør- gen Godø's son had died, that he had lived in an orphanage. The slave who escaped?

He was still standing in the same position in the middle of the floor. Kajsa noticed that he was barefoot, he had unusually large feet. He sneered at her. There was a hardness in his eyes that she had not seen before, his mouth was a clenched line, the tight upper lip made the harelip more prominent. He reminded her very little of the man she had met the first time she was here, the man with the roller and the tears. There was no soreness in him, nothing that made her think of the small child sitting in the dark in the closet under the stairs. He knows something, she thought. Why doesn't he tell her everything?

Abruptly, Sperre turned and walked over to the bar cabinet. He poured himself a drink from a crystal decanter, then turned

and flung her arms out towards the sofa. Kajsa stood for a brief second. Then she followed the welcoming gesture and sat down on the end of the sofa. He sat down opposite her and kept spinning the glass. Finally, he looked up. His face had softened.

– I do not understand it. That's it, I don't get it. You know as much as I do now, and I just don't get it," he said.

– "No, I don't know as much as you do," she said.

– I had hoped that you would find the connection. I can't.

– Can't or won't?

– It's too close to me. I neither can nor want to.

– Why is it too close to you? Because you know the person or persons who took the lives of these attackers? Because you know who it is?

– No, he said harshly.

– "You think it might be someone you know," said Kajsa, "that's what's bothering you. You gave me the information so that I find out. To find out if it's what you think?

Sperre did not respond.

– Who were the six in the gang? It was you and Arvid and ...?

– There are only four of us left. Arvid and Peder-André are dead.

– Peder-André, the boy who ran away with Arvid.

– Yes. Peder-André Høvik.

– So you knew they were both dead?

– Yes.

– How did you know that?

– You've seen my card index, the overview, and of course I've checked every single name. Also Peder-André and Arvid.

– What did you find out? How did you find out?

– Arvid was registered as dead. But when it came to Peder-André, it was difficult. Until his body was found, he wasn't registered as dead. But I managed to trace the case through the CID to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and finally to the embassy in London. They had archived the report from the police in London. In this country

not much was done, just checked whether he had relatives who should be notified, and of course he didn't. No one missed him.

– There is one thing I wonder about. How could they have passports?

– We went on a trip to London, just before they escaped, to an English boys' home. That's actually what gave them the idea for the whole escape. They found out where the passports were kept, stole them and escaped.

– Who are the other three people alive besides you?" Kajsa interrupted him.

– It doesn't help you to know that. None of them ... no one has anything to do with this.

– How can you ?

– I am still in contact with them. They are not able to ... none of them. None of them.

– Okay, then you can ask them if you can give me their names. Then it's not dangerous, is it?

– They don't want to, don't you hear ! It's not them!" he said loudly and angrily.

Then he pulled himself together and replied in a calmer voice: "We've talked about it many times, they have family and colleagues who don't know what they've been through.

– But don't you have the slightest idea who could be capable of killing?

– Everyone. And no one.

– What do you mean by that?

– Everyone I grew up with had reason to.

– You too?

– Me too," he said so quietly that Kajsa barely heard him.

– "Tell me about Arvid Godø," Kajsa urged.

– Arvid Godø was so strict. Sperre sighed loudly: "He should never have been so strict, then he wouldn't have been exposed to what happened to him. He should have given in, , but it was as if he couldn't, he just got harder and harder, more and more stubborn, refused to comply. That's the kind of thing

that triggers an abuser, to humiliate and step on the one who provokes the most.

– How exactly did the six of you become the Gang?

– The gang was the closest thing we had to a family. We belonged to no one, just each other. A small smile crossed Sperre's face - "We cut each other's fingers, we became blood brothers with the motto "one for all, all for one".

Sperre stared into space, his eyes became distant, his face smoothed out for a brief second, as if he was dwelling on something good. He turned his face towards Kajsa again.

– He was a good friend, a leader. It's probably hard for you to understand, but there was an affinity, a mutual dependence and loyalty between us. It's to draw a line under what we experienced, what we meant to each other. We are forever linked. The others were afraid of us, we were the hard core, we were the ones in charge, and Arvid was in charge most of all.

– Arvid and Peder-André are dead, but you - and the other three ...

– Are you not listening me! He's so angry with her. - It's none of us, I know it.

– So ... you were trying to find a killer ... and when two are dead, there are only four left ...

– None of them could have done that," he interrupted her.

– I know what the other three were doing when these murders were committed. They weren't around! Sperre exhaled heavily several times.

– Do you think I'm stupid? I have checked them.

– But you've known all these years that there were four unsolved murder cases in your file box. Surely you must have thought there was a connection?" said Kajsa impatiently.

– Yes... I...

– So why didn't you go to the police! Kajsa looked at him irritated. - Why did you go to me?

Sperre looked at her in exasperation. "We were called in for questioning both when Willy died and when Gudny died. That's not fucking

It was my fault that the police didn't find . Now it was Sperre who raised his voice: "I investigated myself, I didn't find any answers, I had nothing to give to the police. All I wanted to achieve was to be dragged into something that I want to forget! Do you understand that? Then he whispered: - I just want to forget.

Kajsa stayed in the car without starting the engine. All she got out of the meeting with Sperre was discomfort; pity mixed with irritation and resignation. Sperre had known everything she had found out. He had even checked the gang, without finding any answers. Or so he claimed.

With an exasperated groan, she started the car. She envisioned Sperre's hard gaze, the towering figure who had stood barefoot on the floor with his arms crossed. As she turned into Vækerøveien, the thought struck her: Sperre had checked out the others. But what about himself? He was the only person she knew who had a connection to both cases. What had he said the first time she met him? To punish those who should be punished... She imagined Sperre standing on the floor with smoldering, hard eyes. She no longer thought of him as the small, scared boy in the dark closet.

21

Initially, Kajsa only had enough material for a ten-minute report. But by bringing in a professor of history at the University of Bergen, who was an expert on Norway's treatment of German girls and traitors, as well as a psychiatrist, it became a fully-fledged documentary. The psychiatrist's explanation of the trauma of being deprived of her child was particularly powerful, and he went to great lengths to suggest that this was very likely the reason why she was unable to care for Arvid when she later became a mother again. He concluded that Alfhild and Jørgen had clearly developed a hatred of society, they were ostracized, but it was their choice to continue to stay outside, as if their revenge was to ostracize others from their lives.

Kajsa chose to cultivate Alfhild's story and made Jørgen a secondary character; his story was toned down and only used as part of Alfhild's life. Kajsa did this deliberately because it was Alfhild who had time with the child. Jørgen was the breadwinner who was away most of the day, and Jørgen's role in relation to the neglect became unclear. What Birte had told us could indicate that he had tried to care for his son to some extent; he had built a sandpit and given him a bicycle.

They made new recordings on Godøya, took lots of nature photos and pictures of the house where Alfhild had grown up. In addition, they used images from the news broadcasts from the day the murder became known, as well as the new images taken later with a subjective camera, the illustrative images with the little boy and the black and white photo of Arvid in Birte's garden. They also took new photos from

the empty farm in Asker, using a crane that moved high above the yard and gave a bird's eye view that made the farm look like a haunted house. But the best she had were the pictures of Alfhild in Greta's album.

Now they had two days - and one night, as Didden said - to fine-tune; adjust the sound, add music, fine-tune and even change transitions.

The day before the documentary was due to be broadcast, Kajsa's mobile phone rang at a quarter to eight in the morning. It was Pete Howick. His voice was serious. He wanted to meet her, didn't say what it was about, was just very short and formal, very much a doctor.

The last report she had made with Sigrid was about her going through a very tough treatment, which was crucial to the little girl's chances of recovery. They had agreed that Howick would call her when there was any news about Sigrid.

– You can't?" she asked.

– "No," he said, "but we'll talk about it when we meet.

They met in his office at two o'clock that afternoon.

Howick looked terribly tired, as if he had not slept for many days. His face was drawn and his skin was gray, his eyes were sad when he asked her to sit down.

– Sigrid?" she said. He nodded, pressed his palms against each other and supported himself under the chin as he continued to nod.

– But ... it went well, right?

Howick cleared his throat and swallowed as if the words were stuck in his throat. But ... that's how it is with cancer. Suddenly it strikes back, you can never be sure. At least not until you're declared healthy.

– Is all hope...?

He didn't answer, and Kajsa's words were left hanging in the air.

– Can I meet Sigrid?" she asked.

The lively little girl was gone. In the bed lay a limp ten-year-old with closed eyes. Kajsa cautiously walked over to the bed with Howick. He put his hand on her arm.

– Hi, Sigrid, you have a visitor.

A faint smile slid across her face at the sight of the doctor. He bent over the bed.

– Hello fighter, he said.

– Hello, she replied.

– Kajsa is here to visit you. Kajsa leaned forward.

– Hi, Sigrid.

– Hi, are you going to interview me? Sigrid's voice was barely audible.

– No, not today. I just stopped by.

– Maybe tomorrow?

– "Yes, maybe tomorrow," said Kajsa. She met Howick's gaze.

It's as if it's his own child, she thought. The patients' struggle is his struggle, their loss is his loss.

She had a heated argument with the news editor about what to do next in relation to Sigrid and her family.

The reports about Sigrid and - not least her colorful family - were a success for Kanal 4. Viewers were hugely engaged in the little girl's fight against cancer. Every time the news broadcast a report on how she was doing, the number of hits on Kanal 4's website increased, with a link to a special page about Sigrid. It was made up of portraits of everyone in the family. Kajsa thought it looked like the vignette on TV 2's Hotel Caesar. Viewers could also send e-mails to the editors here. Hundreds of emails arrived every time Sigrid and her family were on the news, and the switchboard had its hands full taking calls from engaged - and sometimes disturbed - people. The inquiries could be roughly divided into

into two groups: Those who felt they had been badly treated by the healthcare system, and people who had advice on treatments that could help - everything from reputable hospitals abroad to healers who could perform miracles. The Oslo Church was one of several groups that had become involved with Sigrid and organized prayer meetings for her.

Yes, Sigrid had become a real success for the channel. And that had to be followed up, no matter how it went, the news editor thought. He received support from the duty managers when he called a meeting on the matter after Kajsa had informed him of Sigrid's new situation. On the basis the information from the doctor, Kajsa believed that it would be borderline unethical to follow the little girl's death struggle.

– But hasn't the family agreed that we can continue?" the editor wanted to know.

Kajsa had to admit that they . "But I don't think they're the right people to judge that. They cling to hope, and maybe they even feel that hope is increased by us following them. The father thanked us for our support in the last segment, saying that "the family feels lifted up by the Norwegian people. It gives us all the strength to continue, to hope". Perhaps they even think that we 't continue if she didn't have a chance? So we give them false hope.

– But doesn't she have a chance?

– Minimal.

– Minimal? Then there's still hope? So what's the problem?" asked the news editor. "The case is the biggest success we've ever had on the web, with thousands of hits every time we ...

– Click journalism, Kajsa bit him off.

– Click journalism? This isn't about journalists hunting in packs, or in cliques, as you put it," he added, laughing at what he thought was Kajsa's misuse of words.

– "You misunderstand," said Kajsa, pretending to type on a keyboard and click on a mouse. "I'm talking about when the number of clicks determines what is looked up, what is important.

– Now you have to ..., the day shift manager began.

– "We're not taking it now," Geir Hermansen broke in. And to Kaj-sa's surprise, it was he, the bad boy of all bad boys who supported her when it came to Sigrid. At least a little. He suggested a compromise: "We can't just stop following up on Sigrid without any explanation," he said, and suggested that Kajsa should do a report that evening about the treatment not working, but that Sigrid should try a new treatment. They shouldn't say anything about the fact that this one was only life-prolonging, not curative. The focus should be on the family's hope, unity and strength. A good photographer could take lots of pictures about her without showing how bad she was: Pictures of snakes, appliances, her hand, her stuffed animal, lying with her back to the camera, her parents looking at her, stroking her hair, et cetera. Then they had to wait and see. If it didn't go well, the next report would be from the funeral. Kajsa was not to follow Sigrid closely after today's report, but to keep in touch with the doctor.

When Kajsa sat at her desk after the meeting and was about to Howick and her parents to present the plan, she sat with her head in her hands. She could have come up with Geir's suggestion herself, in fact she had thought along those lines. It wasn't just ethical concerns that prevented her, this was a case that required all of her, she became personally involved in another person's relationship with death. This was not crime fiction, where unknown people were already dead. This was not distance, this was closeness to death. And she didn't know how to cope with it.

She couldn't get hold of Howick on the phone, but she spoke to Sigrid's mother, who gave Kajsa permission to record and broadcast a story that evening.

Over the course of the , she tried to call Howick several times, both on his office number and his cell phone, but couldn't reach him. Finally, she called the ward and spoke to a nurse who told her that Howick was on sick leave.

After the report was broadcast in the evening - with, if possible, an even bigger storm of inquiries from viewers - she called Karsten on her way home. He answered on the first ring - "Hi, Kajsa," he said. She could hear in his voice that he was smiling.

– Hi, she replied. Maybe she sounded tired, maybe he knew her too well.

– "I saw your report, strong stuff," he said.

– "Yes," she replied.

– Does it affect you?

– Yes.

– I understand that. Is there any hope for the girl?

– No, you don't.

– You have to try to distance yourself, it's not your child. There was care and concern in his voice. "Do you want to talk about it?" he asked.

She wanted to turn the car around, drive to him. But they weren't friends, these weren't the kind of conversations they should be having. They were source and journalist. Still, that's what she wanted; to see him, to talk to him, she was touched that he cared. - I have to go home, she said. - But I've spoken to Njål. Tomorrow ...?

– Ok.

When she got home, Aksel was angry that she hadn't told him she was going to be late. He had an appointment to call a colleague in the US to discuss the double murder. "Thea is ill, I've spent the whole evening taking care of her," he said on his way into the home office. Just before the door slid shut, he blurted out: "Maybe you should be as concerned about your own children as other people's!

The words hit her hard, it hurt, but she came to her senses and hurried up to Thea's room and felt her forehead. A little warm, but not very.

She went downstairs, opened the door to the office, and said in her usual voice: "Thea isn't very warm, maybe she'll be better tomorrow," she said to Aksel's back. He didn't answer.

If she's sick, you'll have to stay home. I don't have time. I have to finish editing the documentary, it's going out tomorrow. By the way, it's your turn anyway. I've been home every time the kids have been sick for the past year.

She hadn't expected him to be so angry.

– You're so extremely self-absorbed, it's all about you these days, what's wrong with you? He turned away from the computer with a look that made her cringe. His eyes had an expression as if he was looking at her as something troublesome. It knocked her out completely.

– What ... what do you mean by that. I have ... She didn't come any further.

– You've been working overtime every week...

– Overtime? If anyone's working overtime hereit's you," she interrupted him in a low, quivering voice. She walked towards him, standing in front of him with her hands at her sides.

– You're only concerned with ... he began.

She felt that the cup was full. She raised her hand as she stared at him furiously. Aksel held his arm in front of him to protect himself. But as her hand was heading towards him, it changed direction and hit her own thigh with a light slap.

She turned and walked towards the door, stopping without looking at him in the doorway. - So ... you have no clean shirts? Poor you. There was a mocking undertone in her voice and, she added, she really wanted to rub it in: - It's fine if you stay in the basement living room tonight. Then she walked out and closed the door quietly behind her.

22

– Kajsa you can't take everyone else's pain on board. Sigrid is not your child, not one of your loved ones. Compassion and empathy are fine, but there is a limit.

Kajsa looked at Karsten over the edge of the farris glass.

– And where does it go?

– It's all about professionalism.

She snorted. - Professionalism. And what is that? Indifference?

He leaned over the table, eager. - Listen to me. I have seen more misery than you can imagine. I meet people in the ultimate crisis of life. I wouldn't last without distance. They are not *my* life. I'm not a therapist, I don't work in healthcare. He held her gaze. - And neither do you. You're describing the reality of the Norwegian people. Sigrid is not part of your private life.

He . He understood. She leaned forward, put her hand over his. - Thank you.

He quickly put his other hand over hers. She let him do it, she didn't pull away. Then she said: "Two children. Alfhild was the mother of two.

– I see.. They pulled their hands together at the same time.

– Don't pretend don't know.

– Dear, I can't comment on what the police know and don't know.

– Okay, then. Then you don't get to know what I know.

He smiled and shook his head, "You're not real. Have you talked to Njål?

– Yep.

– And?

– And I've been to Sunnmøre.

– Holiday then, or? He laughed and shook his head even more.

– No, work. Documentary.

– About the importance of capelin fishing for the Sunnmøre people?

Now she was the one laughing. - Not at all. Then she became serious. - About Alfhild and Jørgen. The war story.

– The war story? Okay, he said, - so then you know ...?

– About the German kid? Yes.

– Okay, then. One thing at a time. What did Njål say?

– You first.

– Between us? Nothing on TV?

– Yes.

– Of course, we know about the German kid, we've interviewed Alfhild's sister.

– Greta?

– Greta Godøy, yes.

– Have you found the child? Kajsa bent over the table.

– There is no trace of him. No one knows where he went.

– But if he has figured out his background ...

– No comment. The waiter

brought the food.

– Your turn, he said.

She told him about her conversation with Njål and the walk in the field. Karsten looked disappointed. "It wasn't much. He confirms what you said last time about seeing a man in the forest. He goes on to say that he's seen him many times. That's what's new here. It's interesting, but it's also just a confirmation. We've assumed that the killer must have been watching the house for some .

– Yes, but ... but there's something else he says, something I've been thinking more and more about.

– What is it?

– He says "I don't want to talk about Arvid".

– Yes?

– We're not talking about Arvid.

– But?

– But Njål is talking about Arvid.

– What does that mean?

– That he remembers Arvid? That he remembers that Arvid just disappeared? That it's a bad memory? That he thinks it's Arvid he's seen? I do not know ...

They were done eating, done talking.

– Better now?" he asked, placing his hand over hers.

– Much better, thank you. She felt light in her body, happy. She heard herself say: - What kind of dog do you have?

– Never had one, I don't like dogs.

He felt powerless and afraid. It was a newly created, but old, familiar pain: The feeling of being let down.

It all her fault.

When he was little, he had also been afraid and powerless. Now they were here again, both of them: fear and powerlessness.

Then there had been nothing he could do to change anything. He had lived with fear all the time, afraid of the closet under the stairs, the stairwell, the basement, afraid of the dark, afraid of being hungry, afraid of being beaten, afraid of being raped, afraid of people.

But as he had grown, he had discovered that there was something he could do. Because he had grown tall, and all that running in the forest had made him strong. He couldn't do anything about the powerlessness, not then, later would, but he had discovered that he could opt out of fear. He just had to replace it with something. He replaced it with rage. And he let it grow big and strong inside him, so that the fear was completely gone in the end.

Then he became angry and powerless. He was powerless for a long time. But one day he decided that powerlessness could also be replaced. By then he had become so big and strong that he thought he could kill. After that, he was neither afraid nor powerless. Just angry.

But now the fear and powerlessness were back, and he had to make it go away again, create a change, replace it with something else. He didn't yet know how. But a plan had begun to take shape in his mind, and as he thought, he felt fear give way to rage.

She had let him down.

He had walked back and forth between the living room and the kitchen all night after the documentary aired. That she could do this to him was unimaginable. She who had done him so much good had turned against him.

She had explained away and excused them, portrayed them as victims.

He was out of breath by the time he reached the top and turned off the path towards the terrace. He had been there several times in the past without her being there. It had discouraged him, and he was even angrier now that he knew why she hadn't been home, what she had been up to.

He stood for a while until his pulse calmed down, then crept quietly over to the slope and climbed up until he reached the piles on which the terrace rested. Slowly, he peered over the edge and saw that Kajsa was sitting where she used to sit.

He felt more and more that the time was approaching when he would have to explain everything to her, so that she could understand that she was wrong, that there was no explanation that could excuse anything.

23

Kajsa woke up with a jolt and looked at the clock. Quarter to five. What had woken her up? Then she remembered: She was a child in a dark closet. She was all alone. The dream was stuck in her body, she must have cried, because her cheeks were wet, her body was hot, her nightgown damp.

She thought of Jakob Sperre, Arvid Godø, Ida and Ine-Marie. That's how it had been, that's how they had lived, like in the dream. Small children in dark cupboards, locked away. Incomprehensible evil perpetrated by adults against children who could not reflect on evil, could not put it into words, but could nevertheless sense with their whole being that a human being could not be more alone than when they were unable to protect themselves.

The thought struck her as abruptly as she had woken up: The diaries! Ida Årvoll had written diaries. Had she written about Arvid and the gang? That she hadn't thought about it before.

Ine-Marie stood in the doorway with her mother's diaries in her hands. She was completely different from the last time; no makeup, she looked tired and disheveled, dressed in a black dressing gown even though it was late in the day. She didn't invite Kajsa in. "Only you can read them," she said. She had been reluctant when Kajsa called her, but had finally agreed to let Kajsa read the diaries, in return for her promise to keep what was in them to herself.

– Yes, I promise," Kajsa replied, thinking that if it came to it, she would try to persuade Ine-Marie to go with

that she could quote from the diaries by anonymizing them. There might be material there for a report in the series about children in orphanages. But she had to deal with that later.

Sitting in the car, she couldn't wait to open the first diary.

October 23, 1970
Today I am ten
years old.
I wish I had never been born.

The first two sentences hit Kajsa with great force the moment she opened the book. A ten-year-old who didn't want to live. Ida, Ine-Marie's mother, Gudny Årvoll's daughter. It was just these two sentences, placed in the middle of the page, no explanation of why she felt the way she did.

As she turned to the next page, excited about the story, her mother called. She put on the handsfree and placed the books on the seat next to her.

– Hi, mom, how are ?

– I ... I don't know, she heard her mother say.

– What is your opinion? Don't know?

– I ... don't know how I ... where ... Her mother's voice was just a whisper, she could barely hear what she was saying. Kajsa felt anxiety gripping her. - Where are you? She tried to speak normally, but heard her own voice trembling.

– I do not know.

– Are you in the car?

– No, I'm out.

– Out where, on the street?

– No, in the forest.

Kajsa thought frantically. In the forest. Where could she be?

– Are you out for a walk?

– Yes? Yes ... walk, I'm walking.

– What do you see around you? Are there any houses?

– No, just forest.

A tank hit Kajsa. - Are there any signs there?

– No ... Yes ... Signs? Yes, there are some signs further along here ...

– Can you go there, can you read it says?

She heard her mother leave, then she said: "It says Vestlia on one ... and Myggheim ... Sandungen ... and Haveråsen.

Somewhere in the field, near Solli, Kajsa thought. Where dad died.

– Can you walk towards Myggheim?" she asked. She looked at her watch. She had to call Aksel and ask him to pick up Thea and Anders. She urged her mother not to hang up, admonished her to keep the phone to ear at all times, wait for her to come back. She put her on hold and called Aksel. No answer, after a while Aksel's voice came and asked her to leave a message. Anxiety for her mother mixed with anger, she could hardly breathe. Why couldn't she ever get hold him when she needed him? She dialed the number kindergarten, asked for Stine.

Stine was an intern and had babysat Anders and Thea a few times. She explained the situation to her and asked if she could take Thea home. She explained to her where she could find a key in the garage. She breathed a sigh of relief when Stine said it would be okay. Afterwards, she called SFO and told them that Anders wasn't being picked up, but had to go home.

She picked up the conversation with her mother. - Mom? Silence. - Mom?! No answer. She looked at the phone. It showed that she was still in contact. - Mom! She shouted into the phone, but her mother didn't answer. She thought frantically. Should she hang up and try call her back? No, that would keep her busy, because her mother hadn't hung up. Her chest tightened and she forced herself to breathe calmly. Should she call the police? Should she ask for help? No, she had a good idea.

about where her mother was, so she decided to drive to Solli. Maybe her mother was close to the parking lot. She had to decide what to do when she got there, she had to at least check if her car was there. She's probably close by, I'll find her. Just around the corner.

She drove all the way out of town, past Sandvika, turned off at Holmen, past Asker Museum, past Skaugum, past Sem Gjestegård and Sem kindergarten, turned off up Solliveien. She drove way too fast on the winding gravel road up to the large parking lot at Solli. No cars. Not a single one. She drove right up to the farm. And there! There was her mother's little red Golf.

Think, Kajsa, think. Where could she have gone? What did the signs say? Myggheim, Vestlia. Was she on her way to Asdøltjern, where her father died? It wasn't until she got out of the car that she realized she was wearing high-heeled boots. Damn, she couldn't run around the forest in them. She checked to see if she had sneakers in the car, but no. So she started running up the hill towards the path to Vestlia - in stiletto heels.

She thought she knew where the signs her mother had seen were. She must have walked from Vestlia towards Myggheim. Aren't there any signs on that road? Yes, but what did the signs say?

As she rounded a bend, she spotted her mother. She was right by Myggheim.

– She screamed and ran after her mother.

Her mother turned and waved eagerly at Kajsa, who came running towards her. Kajsa threw herself around her neck.

– No, but my dear, then. Why are you crying?

– I ... I was ... so, so scared.

– Yes, yes, I get it. But there's no danger. I just got a bit lost, it's been so long since I was here, but now we're at Myggheim," said the mother. She was completely normal, it was

as if nothing special had happened, either now or a long time ago.

Kajsa looked at her, met her gaze, her mother smiled calmly. She was completely herself, nothing distant or anxious in her eyes. "But," Kajsa began, "you were... Why did you go..." Suddenly she felt so tired. She couldn't bear to talk to her, to explain to her what was about to happen, not now, maybe later. Not now, not now. Now everything was fine again.

She hooked her arm into her mother's and together they walked through the forest back to the parking lot.

It was a lovely spring day, but Kajsa could still feel the cold from the day she had stood at Solli with her mother and accepted the sled with her father in it.

She wished her mother had said something about it, but she had never mentioned it. She had never expressed that she understood what it had been like for Kajsa - that day, the days after, all those days when her mother couldn't take care of herself, when she had been her mother.

She didn't mention it now either.

24

Aksel threw the tent, sleeping bags and backpacks into the car with sudden, angry movements. Kajsa was squatting on the stairs with her arms around Anders and Thea. They had their stuffed animals in the crook of their arms. She had taken all her anxiety about her mother out on Aksel. "Why is it always difficult to get hold of you at the time when I'm most likely to call to ask you to pick you up from nursery? Coincidence? Ha! I was out in the field looking for my mum, while you... - Stop it! You're just getting more and more bitchy!

with each day," parried Aksel.

She was sad, anxious for her mother, for little Sigrid, for the letters she had received. She needed someone to hold her. But Aksel doesn't see it, she thought as the car disappeared with two waving children in the back seat.

Aksel was going on the annual father-and-child trip to the camping site at Rødtangen, together with his friend Kjell and his children. Anders and Thea were looking forward it, Aksel was looking forward to it. She was dreading it. She went into the house, leaned against the front door and felt the feeling of being alone creeping under her skin. The darkness lay in wait for her.

She had to find something to do, something to keep her mind off things. She pulled out Ida's diaries and looked at the clock. It was nearly six o'clock. Too early for a glass of ? Nope! If was anything she needed right now, it was a glass of wine or more, then she could read the diaries and lie down on the sofa and fall asleep there - fit the breeze to be a little less afraid of being alone.

There was one diary for each year. All the books began on Ida's birthday, and the first sentence was the same: "Today I am eleven years old and I wish I hadn't been born. Today I am twelve years old and I wish I hadn't been born."

In the first three books, until Ida was thirteen years old, there was no explanation of what she meant by this first sentence. The books contained only short stories and descriptions of what she had done, colored with flowers and drawings of landscapes, always in the sun. In between, there were small memorial poems. Some Kajsa recognized from her own childhood, others she might have written herself. Not a single word mentioned other people, not her mother, no friends, it was just about what she had done, what she liked to do; running in the woods, picking flowers, swimming, skiing, drawing.

The diaries gave Kajsa the impression that Ida was a very lonely child, who often sought out nature. With the exception of the first two lines, everything was about what was nice, with painterly descriptions of sunrise, the light that fell between the trees in her shoes, how soft the moss felt under bare feet, animals she had seen. She wrote well, and she wrote in a way that showed she was a mature child. She described in detail how she had observed a crow that had had baby crows, how often the mother crow fed them, how they began scream for food when the mother approached, and she reflected that "the mother crow doesn't think about herself", concluding that "she is a good mother". Kajsa thought that this sentence was also about her own mother and what she was not to her.

The fourth book began differently from the first three:

October 23, 1973. Today I am thirteen years old and I do NOT wish I had not been born.

The handwriting was neatly looped:

Love endures all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13).

Ida was in love. Now there was something good in her life. And for the first , someone had made her feel special on her birthday. Some of the boys she had gotten to know had scraped together money, cycled - without permission - to the bakery and bought cinnamon buns, which they surprised her with in the barn.

He wouldn't admit it, but it was Arvid who had arranged it, she was sure, because he was the only one she had told. She had also told him that her mother had always said that her birthday was nothing to celebrate.

I'm so happy!" she wrote. To think that someone could do something like this for me?

A little further on, she wrote that Arvid was ill and lying on his bed. "I dropped the gravy boat on the floor when I was helping my mother during dinner. It splashed all over the new white dress that my mother had bought for me. She was furious, and she got 'the can'. I knew what it meant and hurried to run up to my room and crawl into the closet. My mother came and locked me in. I don't know how long I was there, but later I heard someone whispering my name. I didn't answer, but it was Arvid and he heard me, he unlocked the door. I didn't want him to see me there. He was very frightened and wanted to pull me out of the closet. He wouldn't listen when I said it was the worst thing that could happen. In the end, I had to get angry and force him to lock the door. But it was too late. Just as he turned the key, I heard my mother's voice. She probably grabbed him by the neck when she said: "Let's go and talk to Willy, then we'll go down to the basement. Part of me hoped and prayed that Arvid wouldn't get angry. Then he couldn't control himself, and I'm sure he could have killed her. Another part of me just wanted him to beat her senseless so she'd never wake up again."

Willy. Willy Nybø. It matched what Kjelstad had said. Willy Nybø, who was killed in 1997, had been the manager and worked together with Gudny Årvoll. Kajsa felt her pulse rising.

She eagerly the pages. Two days later it read: "Arvid has been in the basement for two days now. Mom knows it. She's not doing anything."

Kajsa nodded to herself. Willy Nybø had turned Arvid into a slave, taken him down to the basement, as Sperre had said.

The next day Ida writes: "Arvid has been allowed to come up. He is so quiet. I feel so sorry for him. What is Willy doing to him in the basement?"

Kajsa sat for a long time looking at the last sentence: "What is Willy doing with him in the basement?"

I know, Kajsa thought.

She thought of the little boy Birte had told her about, the first years of Arvid's life at home with his parents in Asker, the neglect. She imagined the serious face staring blankly into the camera. What else had Willy Nybø's misdeeds inflicted on him?

Kajsa kept turning the pages. Two weeks later she wrote: "I met Arvid at the barn. It's our secret place. Many of the boys are afraid of Arvid, but I know that he is really just kind. Kind and scared. Just like me. I think I love him."

The rest of this diary, and the next two, when she is fourteen and fifteen, are mostly about Arvid and the meetings at the barn. Occasionally, she mentions some other boys' names. Jakob, it must be Jakob Sperre, Kajsa thinks. She makes a note every time a name comes up. In the end, she is left with ten names. Arvid, Jakob, Gunnar, Peder-André, August, Nils-Martin, Hans-Erik, Vidar, Stein and Brynjar. That's too many, she can't possibly find out from the first names who are the survivors in the group. Perhaps there are also some who were there that she doesn't mention. And that's too many names, because Sperre had confirmed that there were six of them who had sworn "One for all, all for one". Kajsa sighed and continued turning the pages.

In her diary the year she turns fifteen, Ida writes: "Arvid says we'll make a new life for ourselves one day. A normal life, we'll get married and have children and Arvid will have a good job. He says my mother will never be allowed to visit us. He said it so nicely. "We have to take our life back," he said.

The last entry in the diary was written on March 24, 1976.
"Dear diary. It's only two days until Arvid leaves. I don't know how I'm going to survive. He says I have to be strong, because one day he will come back. He has a plan, and when he has completed it, he will come back. He says I'll recognize him, even if it's a long time and he'll be completely different."

After this, Ida writes nothing more in her diary.

Kajsa retrieved the bottle of white wine from the fridge and took it into the living room, pouring herself another glass. Her eyes kept straying to Aksel's computer on the dining table. She could just take a little look, now he couldn't catch her off guard.

She got up and walked over to the living room table and stood in front of the computer, lost in thought. Then she opened the lid and turned it on. Windows started up. She sat down at the table and went into My Documents. There was a folder called DOBBELTDRA- PET ASKER. She went down the list of documents: Forensic Report, forensic traces, questioning neighbors, war history, questioning Greta Godø, profile, child welfare report 1966 - a long list of icons.

She clicked on the last one: Crime scene.

She tightened her stomach muscles, her heart suddenly beat hard, heavy, fast. Her hands froze over the keyboard. Alfhild and Jør- gen Godø stared blankly at her from two dog cages. She closed the lid, swallowed hard, forced herself to breathe calmly.

She stayed seated and looked at the computer. Breathe in, breathe out, easy, easy.

There was something in the picture that bothered her. She didn't know what

it was, she hadn't looked at it for more than five seconds at most. She stood up, walked across the floor, picked up the wine glass on the coffee table, took a big gulp.

Then she sat down at the computer again, took a deep breath and opened the lid. The hibernation mode disengaged, and the image returned. Kajsa forced herself to look at it, avoiding looking into the eyes of the dead. The picture was taken from the front, inside the dog cages. Both were sitting with their legs out through the opening, leaning against the wall of the cage. They appeared to be wearing headbands around their foreheads. They were attached to the cage chain to hold their heads up. Around their stomachs, they had the same type of band, probably to hold their upper bodies up.

in place.

There! There was what she had seen, but not long enough her brain to process it. The hands.

Her hands were folded on her thighs.

But there was a gap of about five centimeters from the wrists to the hands.

They were cut off.

She felt a sudden nausea, she held her hand in front of her mouth, but forced herself to look. There was something more. She closer, clicked the zoom button with a trembling finger, got close to Jørgen Godø's hands. Then she saw it: A woman's ring. Oh my god! It wasn't his hands, it was hers. The hands were reversed.

She slammed the laptop lid shut and stood up. There was so much more in the folder she wanted to see and read, but she couldn't, her stomach was churning.

She thought of their hands, but it was their eyes she saw. Dead eyes that followed her with their gaze.

She ran into the bathroom and threw up.

Afterwards, she went out onto the terrace. She needed some fresh air. It was a beautiful evening, completely still, the sea was shiny like a mirror, not a ripple. It smelled like spring.

She stood up and walked right up to the railing. She squeaked

until she heard a sound from the forest just below. But it became completely silent, nothing more could be heard. Probably just a cat, she thought.

He was just heading towards the terrace when he heard a noise. He quickly retreated, crouching down. He cursed inwardly as he stepped on a twig. She stood by the railing and squinted in his direction.

He hadn't intended to go through with the plan this evening, but when he had seen the man load the car full of equipment and drive off with the children, he had made a quick decision. He had arranged everything a long time ago, so it might as well be now, it was perfect.

He had been thinking about buying a house for a long time and had started looking at the ads. He wanted a house with a large garden that changed with the seasons, with flowers, fruit trees and berry bushes, climbing roses along the wall, a large lawn and a covered terrace. He knew as soon as he went to view the house that it was a perfect fit. Not least because the family that had lived there had left the white goods and some furniture behind. They were moving abroad.

It had only been two days since he received the keys. As he stood with them in his hand, he realized that the time was closer than he thought. That's why he had started planning. Now everything was ready. In fact, he had made his final purchases as late as the same day: Food and drink, of course, a bright red catsuit, fleece pants and sweater, panties, as well as super underwear and a dark blue sweater with a windbreaker that she could wear when they went out. He had also bought white satin bedding, which he had put in the washing machine.

the machine.

Was there anything he had forgotten? No, he couldn't think of anything. He was completely clear.

I'm a wimp, Kajsa thought. But she went inside and locked the terrace door. Pull yourself together, it was just a cat.

She sat down on the sofa, turned on the TV, tried not to think about the picture on Aksel's computer, but the dead eyes were still looking at her.

She took out the sheet on which she had written down the boys' names. Ten ordinary Norwegian boys' names. Six of them were those who had been part of the hard core: The gang. Which of them? What was it Sperre had said? That the four who were still alive were still in contact today. Who were they? Did they meet? When did they meet? Where did they meet? She ran her finger down the list. Did she know anyone with these names? Her finger stopped at one name: Vidar. She only knew one person called Vidar. Vidar Kvande. Could he be an orphan? Very possibly. It would explain the lack of information about what he had done before he suddenly appeared like a rocket in the celebrity sky of the financial world, and it would explain his interest in orphanage case.

She stood up thoughtfully and walked over to the window. Darkness pressed against the pane. She craned her neck to see if anyone was at the neighbors' house, but could only see the windows on the second floor. There it was completely dark.

Her anxiety grew, the house became emptier, the darkness more intrusive at the thought that there were no people in the other houses around her either. She would feel better if her neighbors were home.

I haven't picked up the mail, she thought, I can do it now, see which of the neighbors are home, feel that there are people nearby.

She opened the front door and saw that it had started to rain, she put on her raincoat and ran the fifty meters to the mailbox. As she ran, she looked at the houses and that no one was at home at the two closest neighbors, just over the hedge and on the other side of the road.

Even though she was only running, she felt out of breath. Her fingers tingled slightly as she opened the mailbox, and she felt very reluctant to return to the empty house. The older

The couple in the house closest to the mailboxes were obviously at home. They were having company, she could see people dressed for a party inside, a couple of candles burning in the window.

That made her feel better. You have nothing to be afraid of, you're just afraid of the dark, it's not dangerous, she thought as she strolled back.

She quickly leafed through the mail in the hallway. A letter, addressed to her. No address, no stamp, placed in the mailbox. Her heart pounded hard. A new letter. Breathe calmly, breathe calmly, that's it, it's just a letter, it doesn't have to be from the same person as last time. Her hands were shaking so badly that she had trouble opening the envelope. Her legs felt weak, and she leaned against the front door, slowly sinking to the floor. At the sight of the words on the sheet inside, her hands began to tremble and she dropped the sheet to the floor.

It left with the text up.

You have found me.

Eternity.

She was scared like a little child, and felt that she wanted to give in and cry with fear, as children do, as adults do not. The sight of the couple in the dog cages came back, the dead eyes looking at her. Is the letter from the person who did this to them? The killer?

I have to call Aksel. No, not Aksel, I can't upset him, ruin the trip he and the children have been looking forward to. What's more, Aksel was angry, she had cursed herself not calling him and pretending nothing had happened.

She picked up the sheet. What does he mean I've found him? Who is this guy? It must be someone I know, someone I've met, someone who knows me. *Eternity.* My perfume. How does he know what perfume I wear? Has he been that close to me? She couldn't think. The fear was absolutely paralyzing. She crumpled the sheet of paper hard into a little ball and stuck it in the pocket of her raincoat. Where's my cell phone? I need to call someone. She stood up, took off her coat and hung it on the hook.

gen. Who is it from? *You have found me*. Who have I found? What is it that I have not understood? Who am I not seeing? She went into the living room, looked for her cell phone, couldn't find it. Where had she put it? She picked up the landline, called herself, but there was no sound. Where was the cell phone? She raced around looking, in the hallway, in the kitchen, in the bathroom. She couldn't find it. Panic was about to overcome her. It had to be set to silent mode, or maybe it was discharged.

She sat down heavily on the sofa, grabbed the remote control and found a travel program on one of the foreign channels. Just what she needed to calm her pulse. The wine bottle was empty, she fetched a new one from the kitchen, feeling unsteady as she walked back to the sofa. It didn't matter, no one saw her, no Aksel, no children, just her. It's not dangerous, I'm safe here in my own home.

Tomorrow everything would be different.

She drank greedily from the glass, as if it were water. Who is this guy? It's someone I know. She envisioned the images on Aksel's computer. Is he the one who has done it, who has smelled my skin?

She turned off the TV. It became quiet and dark in the living room. She turned it on again, it was less lonely when it was on. She had to sleep, it was late. She turned the sound down.

She saw their eyes, dead gazes looking at her. She did not want to see their eyes.

She envisioned Aksel. His gaze was hard, unforgiving. She didn't want to see Aksel's eyes like that. She imagined Karsten. He was smiling. She wanted to call Karsten. No, his number on her cell phone.

Tomorrow she would find her cell phone, tomorrow she would call Karsten. She had to give him the letter. No, she didn't want to think about the letter.

She saw Karsten's warm eyes. That helped. Tomorrow I'll call Karsten.

She lay down on her side. The TV screen lit up the room. Jørgen has got Alfhild's hands. That's the message. Jørgen has got Alfhild's rough hands, she thought.

How does he know what perfume I wear? He's been right next to me, he's smelled my skin.

She started to cry.

It was as if she had made everything ready for him. When she came in from the terrace, he crept around the corner of the house and looked in through the kitchen window. He saw her pick up a bottle of wine and go back to the living room. He stopped and thought.

Shortly afterwards, she suddenly came out. He squeezed into the corner by the stairs and watched her skip across the road. He thought about it for a few seconds, checking that he had what he needed in his pocket. Luckily, he had already planned everything. He quickly ran up the few steps and felt the door. It wasn't locked. He slipped inside and made sure to close the door firmly behind him.

The floor in the basement was perfect. It ran at an angle and at the bottom along the entire short wall there was a clothes rack full of clothes, which he could crawl in behind. He had carefully checked the other rooms in the basement and found that the bedrooms had to be on the second floor. Down here, there was a large basement living room, a kind of study adjacent to the exit to the garage and what looked like it could be a guest room, as well as this storage room. This probably meant that she wouldn't come down here during the evening. He sat down on the floor and waited. He was good at sitting still and waiting in the dark.

When it was two o'clock, he went out into the hallway, crept up the stairs, not a sound came from him, and peered over the edge into the living room. He noticed that the candles that had been lit when he arrived were now blown out. The downlights along the large windows facing the terrace were still on, but at a low level.

The TV screen lit up the room with a flickering light. Had she forgotten to turn off the TV? He crept further up the stairs. When he was halfway up, he noticed a movement on the sofa,

and froze with one leg lifted towards the next step. Then it went quiet again.

She was lying on the sofa asleep. He stood still for a minute or two to make sure she wasn't awake. While sitting in the booth, he had prepared a small brown bottle and a cloth in his pocket. Now he poured some of the contents onto the cloth, walked across the floor towards the sofa, taking care to step on the blankets to make as little noise as possible. Quietly, he grabbed a pillow, put his hand with the cloth under the pillow and pressed it against her face. She , but he was much stronger than her, and in the end she became completely lifeless. She hadn't seen him. Then he took out the syringe and injected it. Now she wanted to sleep for a long time.

He sat and looked at her, she was so beautiful. Then he turned her on her side, with her back to him, and lay down next to her, in the same position as her, holding her and sniffing the smell of freshly washed hair and Eternity perfume.

He had walked around Steen & Strøm and smelled and smelled before he found her scent. He had bought a bottle, and when he felt the anxiety creeping in, he used to spray some on a handkerchief and breathe in the smell of her. But there was nothing like lying next to her and smelling the scent from her own body.

For so long he had dreamed of this ... and now he was lying here holding her. He felt very happy.

25

It was almost six o'clock when Aksel, Thea and Anders pulled up in front of the house. He expected Kajsa to come out when she heard the car and run with open arms towards the children. But nothing happened, and Aksel felt a growing sense of unease. He had tried call Kajsa several times on the way home, but got no answer.

When she didn't come out to greet them either, he felt his irritation turn to anxiety. It was completely unlike her. He took the stairs in two strides. The door was unlocked. He breathed a sigh of relief and shouted: - Kajsa! There was no answer. He went into the living room. He shouted even louder up the stairs to the second floor. Anders and Thea stood in the doorway looking at him. Thea had put her thumb in her mouth. "Where's mum?" asked Anders. "No, I don't know, she's not here, she'll be back soon.

he replied, making his voice unconcerned.

He helped them off with their laundry. "Children's TV is about to start," he said lightly, and they went and sat down on the sofa.

That's when he noticed a wine glass and an empty bottle on the table.

She would never leave an empty wine bottle on the table until the next day. She always cleaned up before she went to bed.

He thought frantically. Where could she be? He called her mother. She wasn't there, she hadn't seen her since Friday. Maybe she'd gone to visit Hanne, her friend down the road. No, Hanne hadn't seen Kajsa for weeks. Then it occurred to him that she might have been called out on

Job. Yes, that's how it had to be. He called Channel 4 and spoke to the duty manager. No, not a damned thing had happened, he replied, Kajsa hadn't been at work since Friday. Maybe she was out running? Maybe something had happened to her? She could be lying injured in the woods, without her cell phone, or with a flat battery, maybe there was no signal. He ran down into the basement to the room behind the garage. No, not that either. The training clothes were hanging on a hook, the new running shoes were

neatly lined up against the wall.

– I'm hungry, shouted Thea from the living room.

– Me too," agreed Anders.

Aksel got out a bag of tomato soup, boiled eggs and macaroni, took garlic baguettes from the freezer and put them in the oven. All the time he kept glancing at the clock on the kitchen wall. This was completely unlike her. He had checked every place he could think of. He had even checked all the rooms in the house and had the hysterical thought that she could be lying somewhere, that she could have had a heart attack or stroke or something like that. It could also happen to young . Calm down, there's certainly a natural explanation, she'll be here soon. Don't let the children know that you're worried. He stood with his hands on the kitchen table and stared aimlessly at the table surface. He breathed calmly. Why hadn't he called her, not once since they left on Friday? He should have called. Normally, he would have, but he was so angry with her that he didn't. And when he didn't hear from herhe certainly wasn't going to call her.

Why hadn't she called, she would usually have called several times during a weekend, annoyingly often, if he was to be honest. - Must hear the children's voices, she used to excuse herself. - I miss them, you know?

He should have realized that something was wrong when she didn't call. He should have called her himself, he should have dealt with his anger and irritation. He should have ...

– Where is mommy? I want to go to mommy, Thea whined.

– Why isn't she here when we get home?" Anders repeated.

– I don't know!" replied Aksel irritably, before coming to his senses. "She'll probably be here soon," he said reassuringly.

– "Maybe she's moved," said Anders.

– Moved? Are you being silly, she hasn't moved," replied his father, ruffling his hair.

– I heard her say it to you, that one day she was going to move. Aksel looked at his son, his eyes were afraid. He had heard them arguing. It stung Aksel, and he pulled Anders close to him. "Sometimes adults say stupid things they don't mean," he said. He thought to himself: Has she moved? While we were away? She couldn't have done that. He pushed the thought , she would have at least let me know, wouldn't she?

Nevertheless, he went up to the bedroom and checked the closet. He couldn't see that anything was missing. He checked the closet in the hallway, where coats and jackets, boots and shoes were hanging where they used to be. He tried to find out if anything was missing, but it was impossible, she had so many clothes and different types of footwear that he gave up.

The children refused to go to bed until mom arrived. In the end, he had to resort to a white lie that he had spoken to her and that she was at work. She was probably very busy, that's why she hadn't called, and no, they couldn't call her, she was too busy.

He allowed Anders and Thea to sleep in the double bed. "Mum won't be home for a few days," he said.

Thea fell asleep quite quickly, it had been a weekend with lots of activities and fresh air, but Anders ostentatiously turned his back on him when he went to say goodnight. Aksel sat on the edge of the bed, stroked his hair, asked if he was sad, told him not to worry, mom would be home soon. But Anders just said he could go, it was fine, he wanted to sleep, he was tired. Aksel could hear in his voice that he

was on the verge of tears, but he left anyway, he had enough his own anxiety and just wanted Anders to fall asleep too, so he could calm down and think about what to do.

He walked back and forth across the living room floor, into the kitchen, back to the living room. He sat down on the sofa, tried to call her again, sat perfectly still, listening intently. Then he felt a slight vibration. He put his hand between the cushions. There, in the corner, was Kajsa's cell phone.

She would never the house without her phone.

He walked back out into the hallway and stopped to look at her clothes, shoes and boots. Was anything missing? Where were the new spring shoes she had shown him last weekend? He looked, but couldn't find them. He leaned against the dresser. She was wearing the new shoes. She was out. Without her cell phone. It didn't make sense.

He leaned against the chest of drawers, noticing an envelope lying on the floor between his shoes and the wall. It only had Kajsa's name on it, no stamp.

She had received another letter. The envelope was empty. He pushed his shoes to the side, checked the chest of drawers, the chair, went into the kitchen, looked everywhere for what had been inside, but found nothing.

Anxiety crawled like an ant up his spine. He looked at the clock. Ten o'clock. He had to talk to someone, he couldn't stand it any longer.

Karsten Kjølås responded immediately. The words just flowed out of Aksel.

– Calm down, Aksel. Take a deep breath and try to speak calmly. Is Kajsa gone? Gone how? Take it from the beginning again. After a short while, Karsten interrupted him again: - I came-

more right away.

Twenty minutes later they were sitting at the kitchen table. Aksel showed Karsten the envelope.

– Could it be from the same one?" he asked.

– Maybe. We'll send it for examination, but if it's from the same sender as last time, there are unlikely to be any traces on it. In any case, it doesn't necessarily have anything to do with Kajsa's disappearance.

– "Kajsa's disappearance," Aksel repeated slowly, "that's what it is. You think she's disappeared?

Karsten hesitated - "Does Kajsa have any ... I'm sorry to ask you this, but you know I have to: Does Kajsa have any reason to leave?

– What do you mean?

– Could she have left?

– You mean abandoned me? Now you have to ! Aksel stood up angrily.

– I have to ask ... Has she been depressed?

– Suicide? Not Kajsa, she's gone, Karsten! She's received another letter, maybe from the killer. She hasn't disappeared of her own free will, you have to understand that!

Karsten didn't answer. - "Well," he said, "can I look around?

Aksel just nodded.

Karsten started by checking all the doors and windows. - The front door was open when you got home?

Aksel nodded again.

– "No signs of anyone breaking in anywhere," Karsten concluded. - What else did you notice? What was the first thing you thought when you entered the living room?

– There was a glass and an empty wine bottle on the table.

– Where?

Aksel pointed to the table. Karsten sat down on the sofa. He bent down, sniffed the air, picked up a pillow that was lying there and held it up to his nose. "What's that smell?" he asked, handing the pillow to Aksel. Aksel smelled the pillow. His face turned completely white. - Ether? My God ... Someone has drugged her ... Someone ... Aksel leaned against the table and slowly sat down on the sofa.

Karsten pulled out his cell phone and asked, "Can you come right away?" "Yes, it's urgent.

26

There had been few cars on the E18 from Asker into the city. At Vækerø, he had turned off towards Røa and continued up towards Holmenkollen, to the house in Ankerveien.

When he arrived, he drove past the garage down by the road, up the small hill and parked right next to the front door. He blessed the tuja hedges; none of the neighbors could see anything.

He carried Kajsa into the stall at the bottom of the basement.

The floor was empty of junk, except for a couple of old foam rubber mattresses. He gently laid Kajsa down on one, checked her pulse, listened to her breathing and turned her to face the wall. Then he lay down next to her, holding her.

Slowly she would wake up, be fuzzy and groggy for a while, she would get scared when she realized what had happened. It was understandable, but he was supposed to be there, looking after her all the time.

Aksel had spent the whole night listening to the investigators rummaging around the house. He hadn't slept for a single second.

He lay in the middle of the double bed with one hand on each child, occasionally gently stroking their warm backs with his fingertips, listening to their breathing, Anders was restless and talking in his sleep, but he didn't understand anything he said.

Both Anders and Thea used to get into bed every single night. He disliked it very much, it became cramped, he woke up and often strolled irritated into one of the children's rooms to go back to sleep, banished from his own bed.

It had started when Anders was a baby. He had found it difficult to calm down in the evening. He didn't want to sleep. Kajsa couldn't hear him cry; she was in and out of the nursery all the time. It wasn't possible for Anders to calm down the way she was disturbing him. He thought they should follow the nurse's advice to let him scream until he realized that the battle was lost and that he might as well go to sleep. But she hadn't listened to him.

Anders also woke up many times every night. Kajsa was there, of course, and got him out of bed and into the double bed. "You teach him that as long as he cries, he gets what he wants," he had said.

But she wouldn't listen.

When Thea was born, she did the same with her, even though she didn't have the same problems falling asleep. Just a little whimper from her at night, and Kajsa was there to take her in. Anders was already there, used to getting up and finding his own way.

He and Kajsa had had many arguments about this. She refused to tell the children that they were "not wanted", as she put it. So he put up with it for the sake of the domestic peace, just as he put up with so much because Kajsa wanted it that way.

Now he felt that he had to have these two bodies with him in order not to break down. For their sake, he had to be strong, but he had no idea how.

Where was she? Who had taken her? Why had they taken her? And when? Why hadn't he called home over the weekend? If he had called and not been able reach her, he would have realized that something was wrong, he would have gone home, called someone. Had it already happened on Friday? Would he have given the person who had gone away...

led her, two days ahead? It's my fault, my fault. If I just...

Is she dead?

The thoughts gave him no peace.

He stroked and stroked the two children's backs.

At seven o'clock, he heard the front door slam shut and it went completely silent. He had said the night before that he didn't want any investigators in the house in the morning, so that Anders and Thea wouldn't notice anything. He got up and went into the shower, standing there until the water was ice cold.

When he came downstairs to the living room, Anders and Thea had got up.

They had sat down on the sofa in front of the TV.

– "You know that you ..." he began in an angry voice. "You're not allowed to watch TV before breakfast," he said, picking Thea up and walking into the kitchen. I WANT to watch TV!" she protested.

Aksel pretended not to hear. Anders followed and sat down at the kitchen table without protest.

– Now we're going to have breakfast. What do you want?" he asked and sat Thea down hard on the step stool. She stood up furiously, her face completely red. "I do NOT want breakfast," she shouted.

– Sit down!" roared Aksel.

Thea started to scream.

– "Sit down and I'll give you breakfast," Aksel said in a normal voice, but he pushed her hard back down on the chair. Thea remained seated, rubbing both her eyes and howling.

At the same time, the doorbell rang. Karsten stood outside with a large box in his arms. "Hi, how are you?" he said, looking towards the kitchen.

Aksel waved his arm in exasperation and invited him in. Karsten went into the living room and put the box down on the dining table. He stood in the doorway to the kitchen and watched Aksel make breakfast for the children. Thea stopped screaming when she saw Karsten, but she pushed the ashtray away with a scowl.

– I'm in a bit of a , said Karsten. - Do you have a few minutes?

Aksel resigned himself and turned on the TV in the kitchen, placing the plate with the slice of bread in front of Thea again. Only then did she calm down, and Aksel and Karsten went into the living room.

Karsten began taking out piles of folders from the box and laying them out on the living room table. "I've spent the night going through Kajsa's computer. Here are printouts of what I think is relevant. I need your help. Can you go through it?

– "Yes," replied Aksel, "it's nice to have something to do.

– Do you have someone who ... can help you?

– For ?" Aksel asked hesitantly.

– Aksel ...

– Yes, yes, yes, I know, but I don't need anyone to talk to. It is better to work, do something useful.

– Yes, but you may need help with the practicalities; the children, calling around to the family ...

Aksel ran his fingers through his wet hair. - Yes, I know, I'll call ...

– "It's only a matter of time before the story breaks in the media," said Karsten. "Channel 4 already knows, I've spoken to Geir Hermansen. If I know him correctly, they will run the story already tonight. Naturally, they want to be first.

– Vultures!" said Aksel harshly.

– Sure, but that's how it is.

When Karsten had left, Aksel sat down heavily on the chair and looked out over the table with all the folders.

Was the answer in these piles of paper? He stood up with heavy movements; his arms, his legs, his whole body ached, as if all his muscles were full of lactic acid.

– "Come on, we have to go now," he shouted to the children.

– I don't WANT to go to kindergarten!" replied Thea defiantly.

It continued in the same way. Thea didn't want to wear the clothes he had ; they were the wrong trousers, the wrong color of

the sweater, the socks were not soft enough. She threw them around her in protest.

He didn't have the strength for this, he just stood there looking at her, he couldn't do anything, he wished he was alone.

– "Lets go to your room so you can choose for yourself," said Anders, taking his little sister by the hand.

Aksel watched in amazement as Thea let her big brother lead her up the stairs without protest, he swallowed hard the lump growing in his throat.

Five minutes later, they returned. Thea was wearing one of her finest dresses, which was definitely not suitable for going to kindergarten, but Aksel pretended not to notice.

In kindergarten, Thea became impossible again. It was half past eight and Anders was going to be late for school. He had intended to talk to the kindergarten manager and explain the situation her, but now he was running out of time. He would have to call later. Aksel's upper lip was sweating and his back was wet as he ran towards the car, accompanied by the cries of Thea, who was being held by one of the adults in the doorway. He had had to tear themselves away from her.

– You have to honk, said Anders.

– Tute?

– Yes, my mom always honks her horn when she leaves the kindergarten.

– Is she honking? He looked puzzled at Anders as he turned out of the parking lot.

– Yes, you have to honk now! Honk and wave.

Aksel turned around and saw Thea standing in the doorway, red-faced, but at least she was waving. He waved back and honked his horn. The driver the car he met looked at him strangely.

Anders didn't say anything on the way to school, not even when he got out of the car. - Aren't you going to say goodbye?

– Goodbye, Anders replied. He looked sad.

– Is there something wrong?

– When is mom coming home?

– Uh ... I don't know for sure, in a few days.

– Can I call her tonight?

– Well, we'll see. It can be difficult to get hold of her, she's very busy, you see.

– Where is she?

– Out and about.

– ?

– In Spain, it came out of him.

27

He hadn't let her out of the room in the basement all weekend. He had to prepare her. He didn't want her be afraid, but it was necessary.

He had sat with her as she woke up, watched as her eyes began to twitch, she blinked against the light, slowly she began to focus. When she met his gaze, saw his face, a deep frown appeared between her eyebrows. She tried to say something, but there were no words. He held a bottle of water to her lips, put a hand under her neck, lifted her head. She drank, moistening her lips with her tongue. - What ... where am I? What has happened?" she whispered.

- "Shh," he said, "just relax now and I'll tell you everything.
He stroked her hair.

She lay back against the pillow and closed her eyes. Soon the most demanding part of the job began.

He was completely calm, not nervous, but felt this hungry pull of anticipation in his stomach.

When Aksel returned home after dropping Thea off at nursery and Anders at school, he stood apathetically leaning over the papers on the living room table. He felt sick, as if he had the flu, his body ached, his stomach was a big, painful knot.

Did Kajsa have this kind of trouble with Thea every morning? He didn't know, she hadn't said anything about it. He couldn't remember the last time he was the one to get the children out of the house in the morning. Kajsa started work later than him, he left before

at seven o'clock, she was the one who made sure the children got to school and kindergarten. He rubbed his eyes hard. "Get a grip, you're no good to anyone if you don't get a grip!

Karsten had placed the folders on two shelves on the living room table. Aksel quickly flipped through them all, trying to get an overview and understand the system.

There were two main cases with sub-folders, precisely numbered and systematized.

The top row was titled BARNEHJEM, the second DOBBELTDRAPET.

In the first folder in both cases, there was only an excel sheet. Aksel recognized Kajsa's system. He had never seen it before, but she had told him about it when she used it for the first , in connection with some documentary she made a few years ago.

In the vertical line, all the sources were . In the horizontal line was the story that the sources helped to tell. The sub-folders contained typed notes of interviews with the sources; what they had said, how they had , as well as a section at the end that was Kajsa's own observations of the interviewees and the events. In addition, there were some printouts from the Internet: Newspaper articles, parliamentary documents and other factual information. In the last folder of both cases were written notes of Kajsa's thoughts and questions.

Was the answer here? Could these papers explain why she was gone, who had taken her with them?

He took off his glasses and ran his hand quickly over his face. Focus, Aksel, focus! That's what Kajsa used to say to him when she was telling him something and he wasn't paying attention. - Now you're here, now I'm talking to you, Aksel. Focus, Aksel!

He envisioned her standing in the middle of the living room floor, irritated, angry, happy, engaged. Her emotions were always thick on the outside.

The living room floor, where they had danced, was large and empty, the house

was silent, he leaned forward over the table, pressed his face against his upper arm and breathed in short gasps.

For Kajsa's sake. I have to make it. She's alive. He slowly stood up, blew his nose, put on his glasses and the first folder.

28

Her eyes were frightened as she realized where she was, had happened. She huddled on the mattress, holding herself, looking at him in confusion and anxiety.

She opened her mouth, but no sound came out. He just sat and looked at her. It wasn't funny, not in any way, but he couldn't help but smile, because it was perfect, it was just as he had predicted.

– You?" she had finally whispered.

– Yes, he replied.

He had read everything he could find on the Internet about the Stockholm Syndrome. All weekend he had played Janne Olsson from the bank on Norrmalmstorg.

He was utterly fascinated when he came across an old recording from Swedish Radio. One of the hostages Olsson was holding in the bank was interviewed by phone. She assured the listeners that all the hostages were fine."I trust these guys," she said, referring to Olsson and his former cellmate Clark Olofsson, whom he had demanded be released and taken to the bank."It's the police I don't trust. She went on to say that she and another of the women were willing to go with Janne Olsson if he was released from the bank. "I could travel anywhere in the world with him," she said. "People think we're sitting terrified in a corner in here shaking, but that's not true. We have a nice chat, and today we played a game of peasant chess.

Peasant chess, imagine that. It was fascinating.

Olsson had been inside the bank for barely six days and managed to

He had made the hostages feel sympathy for him, and more than that: He had made them turn against the police and the authorities and feel that they were under his protection.

He was excited to see if he could do the same.

The most fascinating thing was that this sympathy grew despite Olsson walking around with explosives on him. Or maybe that's why, he thought. In a thesis on the case, written by a well-known Swedish psychiatrist, he read that fear of the hostage-taker made the hostages - unconsciously - feel sympathy for Olsson because they were dependent on him to survive. One of the women had even fallen in love with Olsson.

He didn't go to any kind of extremes with Kajsa. He did not threaten her in any way. He thought it would be enough to keep her locked up in the cold, windowless shed.

He knew how scared could make you.

For the first 24 hours, he left her alone as much as possible; he was only with her when she needed food.

– What do you want from me? Why am I here?" she asked.

We'll get to that, we'll talk a lot, you and I, but not now," he replied.

– But I ..." she began.

– He interrupted her harshly, held up a finger and looked at her angrily.

Then she fell silent.

But when he came into her room on Sunday morning, she jumped up and flew at him. She howled, clawed and punched. She was like a wildcat. He remained calm, grabbed her wrists, held her tight, said nothing, just stared at her hard.

– Say what you want ... I need to know ... Then she collapsed in his arms and cried.

He grabbed her, locked her arms behind her back and laid her down on the mattress. Then he lay down next to her, hugging tightly. - There, there, there, he said. "Just do as I say and you'll be fine," he said.

After all, he didn't want her to break down, he didn't want Kajsa to

be so sad. But he was still happy about it, because it matched what he had read. She had entered the phase where she realized that she was dependent on him. The next phase was going to be better.

He left her, left her crying alone. But he left the light on.

Later in the evening, he went back downstairs to see her - "Tell me what you want with me," she said. Then he realized that she was on the right track, and he let her come up to the living room.

- I need to take a shower," she said.

He pulled out the clothes he had bought for her. He was pleased with himself, he had thought of everything. He let her use the bathroom downstairs, where there were no windows. He locked the door from the outside. While he waited for her to finish, he lit the fireplace and opened a bottle of wine.

Afterwards, they sat at opposite ends of the large sofa. The flames cast a golden glow over their faces, creating a warm and cozy atmosphere. She sat there with wet hair, with her legs up on the sofa, in the catsuit he had bought for her. The choice had been between a purple and a red one. He saw it now, he had made the right choice. Red was definitely her color. She looked like his woman, they looked like an ordinary couple on an ordinary Sunday evening in an ordinary home in Holmen-kollen.

That's when he decided the time was right and started telling the story of his life.

29

- We are certain that Kajsa has not disappeared voluntarily," said Karsten, looking out over the group of investigators.

He had called Aksel and asked him to come and join the parade on Monday afternoon.

There were some he didn't know before, but they all nodded seriously to him, those he did know came over, put their hand on his shoulder, assured him that they were doing everything in their power.

He was relieved when Karsten spoke - "Our theory that she has been abducted has been strengthened over the course of the day.

He clicked on his computer and an image of a shoe sole print appeared on the screen on the wall. Karsten stood up and pointed.

– This print has been found in several places. He pulled out several pictures and pointed. - This is under the terrace, and this is by the kitchen window. This is in the shoe by the parking lot down by the sea. There are more prints like this under the terrace, not all of them fresh. Again, he pulled out a photo. "This is from the garage," he said.

– Our conclusion is that the person who took Kajsa has kept her under surveillance over time, he has repeatedly been at the house, he has parked by the sea and made his way through the forest up to the slope by the terrace. Over the weekend, the person has been inside the garage, probably parked the car there, and taken Kajsa with him.

Aksel's face had turned completely white. The perpetrator had been standing by the terrace, just a few meters away from Kajsa.

– What's a bit odd is that we don't understand why he's been standing there, there's minimal visibility to the house? Karsten looked questioningly at Aksel.

– She ... Aksel's mouth was dry, his voice didn't carry. A policewoman came to his rescue with a bottle of farris and a glass.

The room was completely silent while he poured the drinks. Aksel thought the sound the water against the glass sounded like a waterfall. He took a big sip and breathed hard as he thought: How am I going to explain that she's sitting on the terrace in the middle of winter?

– She ... she often sits on the terrace in the evening. She likes to be outside," he added.

– Okay, then. Then we have the explanation," said Karsten. "So he's known about Kajsa's ... er ... habit. Enough about that. The most interesting thing here is the peculiarity of the footprint.

Aksel knew what Karsten was going to say: "It's the same as outside the Godø couple's house," he said slowly.

– Exactly," replied Karsten, "It's not a clear sole print, like on a normal shoe, the shoe has a substance applied to it that makes it difficult to identify in the sense that we don't have an impression of the sole of the shoe as it was originally - just like the impression we found under Alfhild and Jørgen Godø's kitchen window. It's likely that some form of anti-slip material has been used. We are now comparing the prints.

Aksel noticed how the police officers woke up. He had seen it before, in this room, how they began to sniff the air, like hunting dogs, when something important was said.

– "The other thing that strengthens the theory of a connection between the double murder and Kajsa's disappearance is this," he said, pointing to a laptop on the table.

Aksel recognized it immediately. It had two small, childish stickers that Anders and Thea had been allowed to stick on it.

– This is Kajsa's computer. It turns out that she has kept system

matic log of cases she has worked on. "If we're right that the disappearance has something to do with Kajsa's work, the answer may lie here," he said, placing his hand on the computer. It turns out that Kajsa

– right enough on a kind of ... uh ... shall we call it freelance basis

– has gathered information about the double murder. For a brief second, he met Aksel's gaze.

You knew that, thought Aksel. He had seen it in Kajsa's notes: Karsten was listed as a source, she had noted what they had talked about, they had met and discussed the double murder.

She lied to me and said she didn't dig into it, he thought dejectedly, but he said nothing.

Karsten continued: "Her interest in the double murder comes from the fact that she was early - very early - at the murder scene. And - he paused and looked out over the investigation team

– she came across something in another case that she thought could be linked to the murder.

Karsten clicked on his computer and pulled up a list of names.

Aksel recognized the names from the folder about orphanages. the scandal.

– These are people Kajsa has had contact with in her work with children in orphanages. She was in contact with many of them after making several reports about the orphanage valley. Over the course of the day, we got hold of many of them. Two that we haven't got hold of, and which are important, are these. Karsten stood up and pointed to two names - Jakob Sperre and Vidar Kvande. He continued: "Jakob Sperre grew up in orphanages and boys' homes. He gave Kajsa information that she started digging into. To make a long story short: Kajsa found out that four people, three men and one woman, who all worked at these , had been killed. That's right. They are all on our list of unsolved suspicious deaths.

Karsten stopped, the room was completely silent for several seconds before he continued.

– And she believed there was a connection between these murders and the double murder.

– "So if we find the killer from Asker, we'll find Kajsa?" asked a young policeman Aksel didn't know.

– "That's our main theory," replied Karsten. "First foremost because of the shoe sole imprint.

– "But that's what we've been trying to do for almost two months, to find the killer from Asker," one person objected. "We don't have any suspects, we're completely stuck, we're getting nowhere. It doesn't help to have DNA when we don't get any hits.

– Karsten ignored the remark, pointing to the list of names.

– These are names linked to the orphanage case Kajsa worked on. If we assume - and I think we should - that the abduction has something to do with the cases Kajsa worked on, then the killer could be found among the people Kajsa had contact with. Karsten pointed again to the name of Vidar Kvande: "It's clear from Kajsa's notes about Kvande that he's unusually concerned about her. He constantly contacted her, invited her to dinners, visited her at work and so on.

– Who is Kvande?" a police officer along the wall asked.

– Don't you know that?" said a woman next to him. The Good Billionaire.

– "Vidar Kvande became known to the Norwegian people when he turned up at the Poor House in Oslo on Christmas Eve a couple of years ago with food and Christmas presents worth hundreds of thousands of kroner," says Karsten. "The poor had never received such nice presents before. Kvande is a financier with an extraordinary flair for buying shares in companies just before the share price soars, or vice versa: He buys his way out of companies just before the share price plummets. There have been insinuations and whispers about insider trading. But no one has been able to prove it. Aksel stood up. He had to get out, he needed air. He heard Karsten divide the work between the various groups as he

closed the door behind him. After a few minutes, Karsten followed and stood next to him. - Are you okay?

– Where did you meet each other?

– At Theatercaféen.

– Food and good wine, perhaps," said Aksel sarcastically.

– Aksel, it wasn't...

Aksel interrupted him: "Do you think she knew who the killer is?

– I don't know, 's nothing concrete to suggest it, but I think she was on to him.

– But he knew her, he was close by. Close to her, close to me, close to my children ... Is he the one who took her? Is that what you think?

– Yes.

– But you'not sure?

– To be honest, I'm pretty sure of it.

– The shoe sole prints?

– Yes, she did. And the letters she received. What do you think?

– I think too. Everything fits. The profile I've drawn up of the killer matches what we know about how he has ... He couldn't say any more, couldn't pronounce those particular words. The planning, the surveillance, the few clues, he's systematic, cold, fearless, intelligent, he pressed on, barely audible.

Aksel heard Karsten breathing hard.

Maybe he's scared too, thought Aksel. It's different for him too when he knows the victim. How does he feel about Kajsa?

– "We'll find her," said Karsten doggedly. It's a good idea to go through the profile, who are we looking for? What is it about the profile in the murder case that matches what we know so far about Kajsa's abduction? Is there anyone in Kajsa's material that matches the profile?

The abduction of Kajsa, thought Aksel. Now it has been said. That's what she is. Someone has taken her. Why would they do that?

Aksel tried to concentrate. Don't think about Karsten and Kajsa, don't think about how close the perpetrator had been, why he had taken her, what could happen to her. He brushed his hair back in a nervous movement as he stood in front of the investigators: "Well ... eh ... well, he's smart, high IQ, probably highly educated, exceptionally methodical and systematic, maybe nerdy about what he does, single.

– A technical profession? someone asked.

– Most likely, at least a profession that requires some kind of technical or methodical skill.

– But he must be a cynical person? asked another.

– Absolutely, very cynical. But he can also be charming and seem both warm and caring.

– How so? Caring?" asked one of the women skeptically.

– Precisely because he is so smart. He has the ability to be the person he most wants to be in different situations. He's intelligent, he has the ability to understand human relationships, to use charm and care. Aksel looked from one to the other.

– Let me give you an example: A woman in the United States killed two babies and was suspected of taking the lives of many more. She said: "I'm a very sensitive person. You can't help but these kids." Did she these kids? No, but she knew how to "act". Aksel drew mnemonics in the air and continued: "Robert D. Hare, a recognized expert on psychopaths, explains it like this: Imagine a colorblind person. He knows when the light is green and leaves. But he has no idea what the color green looks like.

– Do you mean that the perpetrator is a psychopath, then?" someone asked.

– Well ... Aksel fell for it. He has many of the characteristics of a psychopath, such as a lack of remorse and guilt, but there's something else too ... something even more destructive.

– You have read through Kajsa's material, is there anything there

that provides you with new information that can supplement the profile you previously prepared for us?" asked Karsten.

– Yes, it's something ... I don't know ... Aksel's mouth was dry and he took a big sip from the glass of farris. No one said anything, the room was completely silent. - No one is born evil, he continued. "In every murder case I've been involved in, there has been an explanation for why the person ended up killing. There are always one or more "accomplices". The person or persons who turned an innocent child into a murderer or murderess.

– What does that have to with Kajsa's material?" asked Karsten.

– Yes, there are so many ... so many lives that have gone wrong. So many traumas.

– You're thinking of post-traumatic stress disorder?

– Exactly.

– That some of these orphanage children may suffer from it?

– Yes.

– Explain, Karsten urged, "How?

– Take Sperre's story, for example, the feeling of constantly being locked up. One such event can be traumatic, but in this case it is repeated, systematized, inflicted over a long period of time, several years. In addition, we know that children are more prone to developing problems after traumatic experiences than adults. Another thing that also affects how a person copes with such experiences is support in a social network, close relationships such as in a family. In the case of children in orphanages, this becomes a kind of double trauma, because it is precisely the adults who are supposed to provide care and comfort that inflict the traumatic experience.

– "There's something else in Kajsa's material too," Aksel said slowly, thinking about it. "What's wrong with the other murders is that the perpetrator seems to have been with the victims over time. He has made them suffer. Perhaps that's what's important to him? He is preoccupied with suffering. Aksel ran his fingers through his hair. "I'm just thinking out loud, but I think he may have been exposed to some kind of stress, suffering or trauma.

experience, which has marked him for life. He sees himself as an innocent, sees himself as a just judge who up for suffering by inflicting suffering on murder victims.

– So our preliminary hypothesis that he could be found in Kajsa's material, among the orphanage children for example, fits?

– Definitely. And ... Aksel stroked his forehead tiredly, squeezed his eyes tightly shut and sat still for a while. He looked as he'd lost his train of thought. - Eh ... where was I? Yes, ketamine, he said.

– How about that?" asked Karsten.

– Why has he used it?

– To stun them?

– Yes, of course. But why ketamine?

– What do you think?

– This is in line with the theory of inflicting suffering on victims.

– How so? What's special about ketamine?

– That's not what they died of. It's been one of the things I've wondered about. What about the other murders, Kajsa thinks ketamine was used on them too? Aksel looked questioningly at Karsten.

– Yes, it was, but they didn't die from it either. They died of drowning. Inge Sorte was drugged, thrown into the sea alive - and drowned. Jørgen Henriksen drowned in his bathtub. So did Gudny Årvoll, while Willy Nybø drowned in his swimming pool.

– While Alfhild and Jørgen Godø were killed with an overdose of morphine, Aksel continued - and probably killed sitting down as we found them in the dog cages. But he waited at least five hours before cutting off his hands. Five hours during which he was the victims, he added.

– But what do you think about ketamine?" asked Karsten.

– Well, ketamine was used to carry out the drownings and before he overdosed the Godø couple with morphine. But ketamine also has some side effects, which may explain why he has used it, this suffering he wants to inflict

them. The killer did not use ketamine to kill. That's right, because ketamine is not considered highly lethal; it takes a high dose to kill a person. It is, for example, the drug that the soldiers we send to Afghanistan carry with them as an anesthetic. It can be used in the field without the monitoring that you have in a hospital. "It's perfect to put into a patient who is being pulled out of a car wreck or similar. The patient's eyes will be openeven following people around them with their gaze. But he or she is not awake. The body is dissociated from the mind and the person cannot feel pain. So when the killer used ketamine, he made the job of drowning his victims easier. But, and this is a big but with the use of ketamine, it can have unpleasant psychological side effects in the form of hallucinations, nightmares, perception disorders. One addict I spoke to once described it as "hell".

– So ... Karsten looked thoughtfully at Aksel, "What you're saying means that we have a killer who carries out some form of psychological terror against his victims before killing them?

– Exactly, and the motive is suffering. In addition, when we look at the perpetrator profile, there is one more element: Control. He takes complete control of them, as if he has a need to show off to them, to show that they are not in control, but he is. I think suffering and control are as much the purpose as killing.

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She had been full of questions - Who are you? Why are you doing this to me? What do you want from me?

He hadn't answered any of them, just smiled kindly at her.

He told her that she had to sleep in the booth, and she had to be there when he went to work. But if she did what he said, and didn't try to leave him, for example, she would be allowed to come out of the shed when he was home.

– "They're looking for me," she said. "The police are looking me, they'll find out what happened," she said. Her voice gave her away, she didn't believe it herself.

– Oh no, they probably won't," he replied, smiling indulgently.

– How are they going to find you? They don't even know who I am. They'll never find you.

– What do you mean? Never?

She didn't get an answer, he just smiled kindly.

– What do you want from me?" she asked.

– I want you to know.

– What is ?

– Everything, you'll know everything.

– About ?

– You need to be patient.

– Why ..., she began, but he interrupted her.

– "Hush now," he said, holding his finger to his mouth.

She backed away from him in fear. It annoyed him, but then she

he pulled himself together and thought it was natural. Soon she wouldn't be afraid, soon she would be on his side.

At six o'clock, the tactical investigators gathered again. Karsten, Aksel, a CID investigator and five police officers had spent an hour going through the material from Kajsa's computer. They spent most of the time discussing Kajsa's notes, in which she had recorded her own thoughts and questions relating to the two cases. Much of what she wrote difficult to interpret. Now it was up to Karsten to plan the strategy for the further investigation.

– Okay, listen up, everyone," said Karsten. "We're going to work according to the following theory: Kajsa believes that there is a connection between four unsolved murders. These are the murders of ... Karsten checked his papers: - Willy Nybø, Gudny Årvoll, Jørgen Henriksen and Inge Sorte. These cases will be reopened. In addition, Kajsa suggests that there is a connection between these cases and the double murder in Asker. "We're going to pursue that theory, we need to find Jakob Sperre and Vidar Kvande. We need to get Sperre to hand over his files on the orphanage children and check them against the places where the four people killed worked. We will also investigate whether any of them had contact with Kajsa.

Again he looked down at the papers in front of him on the table. - Kajsa also questions the drowning accident in which Arne Slettemoen died. He looked over the edge of his glasses.

– All this is in the overview you have received. Have you read it?

Everyone nodded.

– As you can see, she calls the six people who were present when Slettemoen drowned the Gang. We need to find out who they all were. We know that the Godø couple's son, Arvid, was part of this gang.

Just then, Karsten's phone rang. He looked at the display and answered, "Yes? What does it say? Karsten made a note on the pad in front of him. - ? Okay, then. Thank you. He put his phone in his pocket.

"The technicians have found the letter, the one you found the envelope for," he said, looking at Aksel.

– Where? What does it say?

– In Kajsa's raincoat.

– And?

– It says, he read from the pad: *You have found me. Ether- nity.*

The room fell silent. Everyone knew about the envelope they had found. Aksel bent his head and stroked his forehead tiredly. "It was ... it's ... her perfume ...

He collapsed. No one said anything, it was completely silent, everyone looked at him. He opened and closed his hands, then flailed his arms in exasperation. - He ... he knows how ... how she closes. He hasn't just been standing there by the terrace, a few meters from her, he's been close enough to smell her perfume. When has he been so close? Who the hell is he? His voice rose: - Who the hell is he? What does he mean she's found him? He walked over to the window and turned away from them so they wouldn't see his face.

Karsten cleared his throat - "I understand that this is difficult for you, Aksel, but it also gives us important information: Since the kid- napper has this knowledge, it means that, as you say, he has been close to her, closer than at the terrace. He's someone she knows.

He wrote a name on the pad - Sperre, he said aloud - Sperre was with the couple's son at an orphanage, Sperre Kajsa, Sperre knows her. Let's find Sperre. Let's find out who was in the Gang. But for the time being, let's be open to other possibilities this early in the investigation. Kvande knew her too, is he a "Stalker"? Where is he?

He knows her. She knows him. He has been right next to her. It was the only thing Aksel could think of.

She was still scared, he could see that, but he also noticed little by little that her face was changing expression, that her body language was becoming less clenched.

He talked about his years in orphanages and boys' homes; about the constant hunger, about the punishment when he wet the bed, about the longing for someone to care for him, to be kind to him.

When he was about to tell her about the closet under the stairs, it was difficult for him to find the words; he could hear that his voice was shaking. For a brief second, he met her gaze as he forward and poured more wine into her glass. He saw it then, saw that he was touching her; her eyes reflected his own pain.

This was what he had dreamed of; that she would know, that she would understand, that she would see him.

She was completely calm when he locked her in the . - Is that why I'm here? she had asked, - to hear your story?

– Yes, someone must know, someone must know me.

31

The house was dark and quiet. The police technicians had left before Aksel got home, and Anders and Thea were at their grandmother's for the night. Bibbi was beside herself when he called and told her what had happened. He hadn't been able to talk to her for long, he had interrupted her in the middle of her anxiety and asked if she could take care of Thea and Anders. They wouldn't be able to go to school and kindergarten the next day. During the evening, the case might explode in the media. Someone might tell them. They could stay with her for the time being. For a brief second he thought about Kajsa's concern for her mother, but he quickly it. He had choice, it would be fine.

He didn't turn on the light, he walked into the darkness and stood by the porch door and looked out onto the terrace. He had stood there and looked over the edge at Kajsa. He had insulted her. Without her knowing it, he had intruded into her life, into their lives.

He hit the wall next to the door with his flat hand several times. He felt completely beside himself. He didn't want to be in the middle of this nightmare, he wanted it to end. He wanted it to end now.

He put his forehead against the cool window pane. He stood like that for a few long seconds, turned and looked around the living room. Our home, this is Kaisa's and my home.

It'not a home without Kajsa.

He went into the kitchen and turned on the light. He hadn't put his breakfast away. Thea had spilled milk, there was a large

scaly stain on the table, dry crusts on the plates. He left it and went to the bathroom. The toilet was dirty. Was she going to clean it this weekend? On Saturday? Had she not cleaned it? Did that mean he had taken her on Friday?

All the rooms were chaos. It didn't used to be like this. Kajsa was meticulous about keeping order, she made the beds every morning. He thought she cleaned too much, fussed too much, washed too much.

He walked further into Thea's room. She had pulled clothes out of the closet and spread them across the floor in the morning. He left it at that and went on into his and Kajsa's bedroom. The curtains were still , the bed unmade. He opened the door to Kajsa's wardrobe, bent over, pulled on the clothes hanging there and buried his face in them. They smelled Kajsa. They smelled her perfume. He took out the red dress, the one he had danced with, closed the closet door, leaned his back against the closet and slowly lowered himself to the floor, holding the dress to his face.

Everything he did was wrong. He didn't clean enough, he didn't notice everything she did, he didn't appreciate it.

She was so angry sometimes. Terribly angry. It didn't take anything for her to get worked up. It was enough that he sometimes didn't pay 100% attention when she spoke.

He didn't understand it. Him. The psychiatrist. The one who was supposed to understand people's psyche, he didn't understand why she was so angry all the time, so angry at him.

He sniffed hard at her dress.

She had once talked about a married couple she had seen at a rest stop. He had also been there, but couldn't remember seeing them. Kajsa had explained how the couple had held hands as they walked the few meters to the car. - Why don't you hold my hand? she had said. - We never go anywhere together, I can't remember the last time we walked next to each other like that. - Yes, but why don't you ever put your arm around me when we're sitting on the sofa and

Yes, but I can do that, if you think it's important," he had replied. She had exploded. Again this incomprehensible anger. She had stood in front of him with hard eyes. - If it's important?! she had melted. - Important? For me?! You don't understand anything, you. You're so ... so ... so incredibly ... That's just it: If it's important to *you*, you shouldn't do it to appease *me*. Then it's not real! Ah! "Closeness, Aksel!" she said in the same way: Focus, Aksel! As if she thought he really was the stupidest person she knew. He didn't answer, there was no point. Even though he was angry, yes, furious inside - but most of all hurt, so incredibly hurt by the she treated him, spoke to . She as if it was all his fault, she didn't see that her behavior made him pull away from her.

She wanted closeness, but didn't see that she was the one creating distance between them. How could they have closeness when he had to flee from his own bed, from her, almost every night?

He thought about the meetings she had had with Karsten. He had confronted Karsten with the fact that he was listed as a source in her material when they met in the computer group, and the others there must have noticed it too. He knew that she and Karsten had met regularly before she met him. He didn't know when it had ended. She had assured him that there had never been any relationship, just professional contact with sources. Why hadn't she told him that she had met him, that they had eaten dinner together, as Karsten had replied. In front of the others in the group, Karsten had it clear that he had asked Kajsa to talk to Njål.

- She was able to talk to him in a way that no one in the police force could," he had said. "By the way, that reminds me, we need to talk to Njål again. With that, he had turned the conversation back to the case, and Aksel hadn't asked any more questions.

Suddenly he thought of Channel 4's news broadcast. What

What time was it? He pulled out his cell phone. 19.58. He ran downstairs, grabbed the remote control on the coffee table and turned on the TV. Then he sat down heavily on the sofa and waited.

– The well-known Kanal 4 reporter Kajsa Coren is missing from her home in Asker, said news anchor Tore Abrahamsen. - The police are currently sparse with information, but fear that something has happened to her and are asking for tips from the public. Coren was last seen on Friday afternoon.

The first image that popped up was that of their house.
They've been here today filming, Karsten thought.

– Kajsa Coren lives in this house in Asker, and this is where the last confirmed sighting of her was made on Friday afternoon, the reporter said.

The reporter told us who Kajsa was, what she worked with and what she had done as a journalist. Pictures were shown of Kajsa in different situations; from reports she had made, from live reports and in the studio.

Kajsa's serious face filled the screen.

He looked into her brown eyes. Her gaze varied; serious when she talked about Trygve Jonsrud's illness, sharp when it was about care for the elderly, almost aggrieved, accusing in a stand-up routine in a report about children with cancer who had to lie in the corridor at Rikshospitalet.

Then came a clip from the documentary about Alfhild and Jørgen Godø. She stood in the rocks with the sea rolling in behind her, the wind blew her hair in front of her face, she pointed outwards, then came her voice: - "This is where Alfhild and Jørgen Godø grew up before the war, with the sea rolling in from the Atlantic," she said. Her face was serious, but there was something energetic about her body, as if she couldn't quite stand still.

She belongs there, he thought, by the sea. Why had he never thought about it like that before?

We should have bought a boat, he thought. She'd been nagging him about it for years. - It would have been so nice to get out on the water occasionally.

It doesn't have to be a big boat, just a small one, for Sunday trips on the fjord, one with an outboard motor.

He wasn't a man of the sea, he wouldn't have wanted a boat.

This was followed by an interview with Karsten Kjølås. The reporter asked him if the police believed Kajsa Coren could have been the victim of a crime. "We are currently keeping all options open, but based on what we have reason to believe, there is nothing to that Coren would go anywhere without leaving a message. We are therefore asking the public for help.

A phone number for the tip line appeared on the screen. - Could there be reason to fear that she has been exposed to something criminal?" asked the reporter.

– As I said, we are keeping all options open at this time.

– Could this disappearance have anything to do with her work as a journalist, with cases she has worked on?

– We can't that, and it's something we are of course investigating.

The report continued with an interview with Geir Hermansen, who expressed his colleagues' anxiety about what had happened to "a highly valued colleague and a skilled journalist".

The reporter ended with pictures of Aksel and Kajsa, taken on their way to some party. He had his arm around her shoulders, she was leaning against him, they were smiling at the camera.

How happy we look, he thought.

– Kajsa Coren is married to the well-known psychiatrist, Aksel Coren. Together they have two children aged four and seven, said the reporter.

Two minutes after the report, the phone started ringing. He didn't recognize the number and pressed the red button. A few seconds passed, and then it rang again. He didn't recognize this number either. He once again pressed reject. Then he pressed

A minute passed and the phone rang . It Bibbi, Kajsa's mother.

– Is there any news?" she asked. Her voice was thin with anxiety.

– No, he replied, - nothing new. But the police are working as hard as they can, all available manpower is on the case, and that's all there is to it, he added.

It's okay, they'find her, he heard himself say.

– Do you think so?

She wanted to be reassured, she wanted hope. It felt like he exerting his last ounce of strength when he replied: "Yes, I know the people working on the case, people from the CID too, they're the best we have in this country, over a hundred police officers in total. I really think it's going to go well. We have to keep our spirits up, not give up.

– It's so good to hear you say that, it feels good when you're so calm," she sniffed. "And don't worry about the kids, they'll be fine, they can stay here until all this is ... over," she added.

– Thank you, Bibbi. I'll talk to you tomorrow.

He remained seated with his cell phone in his hand. Calm? Me?

At the same time, the phone rang again. It was Kjell Lauritzen, Aksel's old classmate.

– Are you alone? As usual, it was straight to the point with Kjell.

– Yes.

– Hey, I'll be right there.

– You don't have to...

– Stop joking, I'm on my way.

Twenty minutes later the doorbell rang. Aksel answered it, thinking it was Kjell, but outside stood a journalist and a photographer.

– Hi, we're from VG. Do you have any suspicions about what happened to Kajsa?

Aksel was taken completely by surprise. - No, he replied, and started to close the door.

– Were you the last person to see her?" asked the journalist.

– Yes, probably, he replied.

– When was ?

– On Friday when the kids and I went away for the weekend. But now I have to close the door," he said firmly.

At the same time, the photographer snapped.

He turned off his cell phone, unplugged his landline, turned off the TV and went out onto the terrace. He stood looking out over the fjord. The evenings were noticeably longer now. It was completely quiet, not a breath of wind.

If she were at home, she'd be sitting here. Guaranteed. She would have come in and excitedly told us how the air had , that the pair of pigeons had arrived in the birch. "There's summer in the air," she would say in a happy voice.

She would have sat there with the cup, pretending to drink tea, but he probably knew, that it was wine she was drinking, he had seen through her a long time ago. She drank too much, he didn't understand why, but he hadn't said anything, couldn't bear any more confrontations, let her think she was drinking in secret.

He heard a door slam and saw feet running up the basement stairs. Kjell came out to him, gave him a real man hug.

– " at you," he said. "When did you last sleep?

– Night to Sunday.

– Okay, go inside and lie down on the couch.

They went into the living room, and Aksel reluctantly did as Kjell said. Only now did he feel the pain in his body. Kjell picked up the blanket that was in the stress box and placed it over him.

– "Let's get the practicalities out of the way first," said Kjell.

– Who is it?

– Your family, your parents...

– Shit! I forgot about that. They've probably called. I've pulled the plug and turned off my phone.

– Okay, I know them, I'll call them. Who else?

– Kjell ... I can't think.

– Kindergarten, school, your secretary ...

– No, none of them. I've forgotten that too. My patients... I was supposed to have a lecture today, I...

– Don't worry about it. I'll take care of it. Where can I find the numbers for the headmaster at the school, the director at the kindergarten?

– On the whiteboard in the kitchen.

– I'll give you a call.

– How could I forget to call... My mother..

– Relax. Think about it, you know all about this: You're in shock, you're on the side of yourself, you're unable to relate to your life in a normal way. You alternate between being angry and scared. You're unstable, all you can think about is what's happened to Kajsa, where she is, who's taken her. Your primal instincts kick in, you have to find her. It's normal, it's painful, because it's your woman ...

– My woman...

Kjell looked at him attentively.

– Is that why I'm so scared, so angry?

Kjell didn't answer, just pulled his cell phone out of his pocket, went into the kitchen and started . When he came back, Aksel had fallen asleep. He gently pushed the blanket around him.

Kajsa had to stay in the stall all Monday while he was at work. But by the end of the afternoon he couldn't take it anymore; he pretended to be sick and went home. He had so much he wanted to tell her.

It would take time.

He went food shopping on the way home; he was going to make oven-baked pork tenderloin, rolled in cured ham with mushroom stew and cream-fried potatoes.

It annoyed him that she didn't say anything while they were eating, just sat quietly, picking at the good food. She could probably ask

him how his day had been, commenting that he had endeavored to make it pleasant.

He didn't mean to show how disappointed he was in her behavior, but he heard that his voice was too harsh when he asked her to eat. She didn't answer, didn't look at him, just cut a piece of meat.

It was a nice day, the sun was warm and there was a slight breeze in the air. A perfect day to wash bedding.

He'd turned on the washing machine in the morning, now he asked her to pick up the wet laundry and hang it up on the drying rack in the garden.

She looked at him as if she didn't believe him, but did as he said. He stood in the porch doorway and watched her walk across the lawn with the tub of bedding on her hip.

He had decided to buy the house when he saw the clotheslines in the garden. There were six cords strung between two racks. It was perfect for drying bedding.

He sat on the terrace and watched Kajsa as she bent down, stretched up, put on the clothespin, one step to the side, stretched out the bedclothes, new clothespin; down, up, to the side. It was as if she was dancing.

He wasn't tense, but he was still on his guard. He didn't think she would do anything stupid, she had calmed down, but he couldn't be sure. He had tied a rope between her feet, long enough for her to walk normally, but impossible to run with.

The sun hit the white bedding, making it shine, giving extra light to her face, to her hair.

The picture was just as beautiful as he had hoped, it oozed calm and well-being; a normal, everyday life, a woman hanging laundry to dry in the sun.

It was the picture of everything he longed for.

He was in the middle of telling her about Satan when she interrupted him. - I was right, she said.

– How so?

– You killed him? Him and the other three. You punished them like no one else did?

– So you got it?

– Yes, she said.

Then he told me about Willy's basement. It was difficult, worse than he had . He had never told any human being about what had happened. From time to time he had to stop, think, search for the words.

In one such pause for thought, she said: "You were the Slave.

It all went black for him. Didn't she understand how difficult it was to talk about this; about the abuse, humiliation, the shame?

The rage was back. He hated that name. He never wanted to hear it again, and then she - she of all people - had used it about him. He raised his arm and punched her hard in the face, he was so disappointed. She curled up on the sofa, arms around her head. - Shut up! he shouted.

She collapsed and said nothing.

– "In the booth," he said with tight lips and stood up. He took her firmly by the arm and opened the door to the stall.

– I don't want to go in there!" she suddenly shouted and started hitting him. He hit her again and pushed hard, so she fell to the floor.

– I'm so sorry, she sobbed, - I didn't know that ... I ... am sorry for ...

He slammed the door shut, locked it and turned off the light. Now she could sit there and feel how painful it was to be alone in the dark.

32

On Tuesday, Aksel woke up to the smell of eggs and bacon. Kajsa! He kicked the blanket aside and ran into the kitchen. There stood Kjell by the stove. He leaned heavily with his arm against the door frame, put his forehead against his hand and closed his eyes.

– "Sit down and I'll feed you," said Kjell.

– I don't have the energy...

– I ; you're not hungry, you're not in the mood for food, but you've got to have food, you're no good without it. He placed the frying pan on the table, and Aksel sat down heavily on the chair.

On the table were the newspapers. He pulled out VG. The picture of himself in the doorway filled the entire front page. "Husband despairs: The last to see Kajsa," it read in large type. He studied the picture of himself. He looked old and ravaged.

He turned the page. "Kajsa Coren's husband, Aksel Coren, was probably the last person to see Kajsa before she disappeared from her home in Asker, sometime over the weekend. Her husband and children went on a weekend trip on Friday, and Kajsa was to stay home alone for the weekend. After saying goodbye to her mother and husband, no one has seen the well-known TV reporter. Aksel Coren tells VG that he has no idea what has happened to his wife. He was clearly affected by what happened when VG spoke to him late last night."

Aksel threw down the VG. "Clearly marked." What else did they expect? "Says VG." "They write as if I've come to them and commented on Kajsa's disappearance. It's amazing how they get so much out of so little!

Aksel and Kjell ate in silence for a while.

– Is there anything I can do to help?" Kjell finally asked.

– "Kjell, thank you for being here, it's a great help," replied Aksel.

– But isn't there anything else I can do? Can I think with you, go through everything? Like we usually do. Aksel looked at Kjell thoughtfully. - Maybe... He thought for a few seconds, then decided to tell him what he knew, including about the murder case, even though it was confidential.

sielt, but he trusted Kjell.

They moved in to the dining table with all the papers strewn about.

Aksel briefed Kjell on the system, how the files were categorized based on the two cases; the double murder and the children's home cases, and Kjell sat down to read.

- I want to help you, she said.

He noticed that Kajsa's facial expression had changed. Something submissive had come over her. She even let him stroke her cheek without turning away.

Then he told us more about Willy, the rest of the story about the basement and what happened there.

- I'm so sorry you, it's awful," she said. The concern in her eyes spread throughout her body. This was what he had dreamed of, what he had wanted to happen.

He went on to talk about Jørgen Henriksen and Inge Sorte.
It was easier now.

Both were on weekend duty and worked during the holidays at two of the places he was, two boys' homes. They were pedophiles, he realized today. They destroyed several children, not just him.

– But what Gudny?

– Gudny, yes, an evil person, evil, really evil.

– But what did she do to you?

– Me? No, it was Ida's revenge. Someone had to make her suffer for what she did to Ida.

They sat quietly at opposite ends of the sofa. Neither of them said anything for a long time. He felt that he had never felt like this before, he felt no anxiety, no pain, just a comfortable calm.

– "Now you know almost everything," he finally said.

– So what happens now?" she asked.

– Now ... no, now it's almost nothing.

– But I ... what about me ... my children ...

– Tomorrow we are going on a trip.

– On a trip? Where ?

He just smiled.

33

Kjell and Aksel sat all morning reading through the printouts from Kajsa's computer. At twelve o'clock Kjell looked at his watch: "Now 's time for a jog.

– A jog? I can't be bothered to jog," replied Aksel, looking at him in exasperation.

– Yes, you should, there's nothing to discuss.

Some photographers were standing outside the house as they drove out of the garage. Aksel turned away - "Vultures!" he said in amazement.

Kjell drove to Vollen, where they ran on the coastal path along the Oslofjord. It was sunny but cool, with a slight breeze blowing in the fjord.

Kjell was in much better shape than him, and when Aksel tasted lactic acid, Kjell continued to whip him. Aksel felt the pain, the fear, the shock pouring out of his pores, he his teeth, as if in rage, taking out his last strength for the last kilometer back to the car. He cursed whoever had done this, he cursed himself that it would be okay. She's alive, we'll find her, she'll come back. When he stopped, he leaned forward, holding his thighs, gasping for breath: - Ah! he screamed out loud on the exhale.

Kjell put his arm around his shoulders.

– Ah! I'll kill him!" screamed Aksel.

– *What happened to Arne Slettemoen?*

He looked at her in astonishment. - Do you know about that*?*

She nodded.

– "I was only ten years old, almost eleven," he said, his eyes growing distant.

They had been on another excursion with the leisure leader. He no longer remembered where, only that it was to a cabin by the sea. It was beautiful there. But none of the six boys were looking forward to it.

This evening, Slettemoen only focused on one. Him. Afterwards, he sat with the other boys for a long time. He tried not to cry, but when a couple of them put their arms around his shoulders, he couldn't himself, he cried and threw up at the same time. Nobody said anything, nobody tried to say anything to comfort him, they knew it couldn't be done because they had been there themselves.

– We had all felt the painful taste of having him in our mouths, felt the nausea of smelling him. We sat in silence for a long time, waiting for him to fall asleep in the chair on the pier, not saying a word to each other - what could we say?

Someone suddenly said: "I'm going to kill him."
"Me too," whispered another. The words flew between them: "We can do it now?" "How?" "We push him in, he's so drunk he's going to drown." Someone started to giggle. "He'd be frightened, then." "Frightened? No, he'd be dead!" said one. The remark triggered a collective laugh. They laughed and laughed, they put their hands over their mouths, but there was no stopping the laughter, it welled up as if from a source deep inside the body somewhere.

They were little laughter volcanoes that had lain dormant for so long that no one knew they existed. Now they had erupted unpredictably and nothing could stop the laughter from overflowing, spilling over their bodies and covering everything that was worth crying over.

After a long while, they straightened their backs and the laughter subsided.

Then one person said that he really thought they should do it. Everyone agreed. It was like a game they were all playing, discussing back and forth how they could do it. The words

flew through the air between them, the laughter was replaced by a bitter rage, it grew in each one, became one big community, until they stood up and slowly walked towards the pier.

- We didn't talk, we just walked right up to the chair where he was sleeping. I remember we stood there for a long time looking at him. I can still feel the disgust, the shame I felt.

They had by no means agreed on how it was going to happen, not exactly planned how to get him in, who was going to do what. They just knew they had no choice. They had to do something. They couldn't stand him any longer.

Afterwards, he couldn't remember much about how it . But they had managed to push him into the water. One of them had had the foresight to open his fly. "It looks like he's been taking a piss!"

The problem was that he woke up when he hit the cold water, he made his way to the jetty and started to hoist himself up as swear words poured out of his mouth. One of them grabbed an oar lying on the edge of the pier and hit him on the head.

– I remember standing there looking at body floating in the water. I felt an intense relief knowing that he could never hurt me again.

Afterwards, they went to bed without talking about what they had done. The next morning, they agreed on what to say, went to the nearest farm and reported that the leisure leader had disappeared. He was found later in the day. The case was investigated by the police, who concluded that the man had probably urinated from the edge of the pier, fell and hit his head and drowned.

– Was it you who hit him?" asked Kajsa.

– Me? No, it was Jakob.

– Jakob Sperre?

– Yes.

– So what are you thinking? Aksel looked questioningly at Kjell.

Kjell took off his glasses and put the tip of the temple in his mouth.

They had showered and eaten, now they were back at the table with all the papers.

– I assume that one of the first things Karsten has is to check the alibi of all the people in Kajsa's material.

Aksel nodded.

– I can only do what I think I know something about: To read between the lines, to find the feelings - of Kajsa, of the people she has met, to try to look for what is not written here, but which can still be found. What has she thought about what she has found out in these cases, about the people she has talked to?

– And? Aksel leaned forward over the table with interest.

– There are a couple of things that strike me. First of all: Njål. Kajsa has had the feeling that Njål knows much more than he has said. Kajsa writes: What does Njål know? And I ask myself the same question. What does he know, what is he not telling us? He knew that the couple were dead when Kajsa visited him and Birte on the first day. But he hadn't watched Channel 4's extra broadcasts. This could mean that he actually saw that they were dead. She also writes that he has seen a man in the forest many times. This is consistent with what you have said; that the man must have observed the couple for a long time, keeping an eye on the farm, just as he did with Kajsa.

– But Njål doesn't want to talk, Kajsa tried without getting anything more out of him.

– Yes, I can see that. But he has a secret. And there's one more thing about Njål.

– What is ?

– He thinks the man is Arvid, the child he played with as a child, the child in the picture in the garden.

– Yes, we know that. Karsten mentioned it. But Arvid is dead.

– Njål doesn't think so. Kjell had made notes on a sheet of paper, now he drew a circle around Njål and a circle around Arvid. Then he moved the pen to another word. - What about the German kid? Who is he?

– Apparently, no one knows that. The police an appeal for tips through Sunnmørsposten. They received several tips, but they led nowhere.

– Another thing that strikes me is that Kajsa worked on many other things too, what about them? Kjell pointed to the residents - the ones who aren't here.

– Do you mean that the kidnapper, the killer, may have met Kajsa in connection with a completely different case? A person who isn't in this material?" asked Aksel, looking at the files on the table.

– Yes, why not?

34

At six o'clock, Karsten arrived with Kajsa's computer. The police had backed up everything on the computer and Aksel had asked for it back.

– "We've found both Kvande and Sperre," he said and put the computer on the table.

– And? Aksel and Kjell looked at him eagerly.

Karsten shook his head, "Sperre's been at the cabin, bad cell phone coverage.

– And Kvande?

– He says he has been ill at home, had turned off his cell phone, and did not answer the door.

– Do you believe it? You have to get in with them, check if Kajsa is there!

– We have no basis for this, but we ...

– There's no reason for that," Aksel interrupted him.

– Don't worry, we checked anyway. They both let us do it. We didn't find her, no trace of her at .

There was complete silence. None of the three men said anything for a while. Then Karsten said: "Kvande was also an orphan.

– There you have it! That's right, it's all true," exclaimed Aksel.

– Yes, we are working on it. And another thing: Sperre has given us the names of everyone in the team.

– Who were they?

– Besides Sperre himself, Arvid Godø and Peder-André Høvik,

was Supreme Court lawyer Brynjar Nordbrekke, director of NorFood: August Evensen and Member of Parliament for the Labor Party: Hans-Erik Stordalen. The three new names have been checked out of the case. They have alibis for the whole weekend.

– Kvande was not part of the gang?

– No, you don't.

– So Sperre is the only one who can be linked to both the orphanage scandal and the couple, through his orphanage friend Arvid Godø?

– Yes, we're keeping an eye on him. We're going to investigate his cabin, and he has a country house on Tjøme. Karsten his face. "What are you going to do with Kajsa's computer?" he asked.

Aksel asked Kjell to tell him what he was thinking.

– "We've already done that," said Karsten exasperatedly. "Do you think we're completely incompetent?" he said irritably.

– "You have nothing," said Aksel. Just lots of tips, she was seen in Steinkjer, Karsten. Just nonsense! Time's running out and you're getting ," he said in a loud voice. It's been four days since Friday, Karsten. Four days! Where the hell is she? Maybe she's dead ... maybe he ...

– "We've been working day and night," interrupted Karsten.

– You're tired, there's no point in arguing," said Kjell.

– But we've checked everything on that computer," said Karsten, exasperated.

– We need to concentrate on our main theory. There is nothing else on that computer that is interesting in relation to our main track; the double murder and the link to the orphanage case. The other documents have nothing to do with these cases.

– "Let's check anyway," said Kjell, "Maybe you've missed something, maybe Aksel remembers something Kajsa said ... something, I don't know.

He had logged on to his computer. Now he clicked on My Documents. There were almost forty folders with

sub-documents and over six hundred individual documents in total.

– "Let's start with what's been in use since March," Kjell suggested. So, these are the documents that Kajsa has been working on over the past year.

– "There are hundreds of them," said Aksel, exasperated.

– Yes, but then we press here, and then here, and so on, and we have the documents that she's been looking at for the last two months. Karsten and Aksel bent over the computer. The list showed thirty-five documents and eight folders with sub-documents: Psychiatry, elderly care, hospital finances, infertility, whiplash, children in orphanages, children with cancer and the double murder.

They opened one by one. Kajsa hasn't done any reports on psychiatry and home economics lately. - Look at this, it's just minutes from telephone conversations and tips she's received, probably things she's written down with a view to using them later.

– What about elderly care?" asked Karsten.

Aksel remembered that she had done some stories about it, but didn't know what they were about. "She does stories about elderly care all the time, it's her passion. And there's enough misery to go around.

– Right. Children in orphanages and the double murder under control. Then are cancer children. "It must be this series about Sigrid?" said Karsten.

Kjell clicked on the sub-documents. "These are the names of the family," said Aksel and asked Kjell to scroll down. "This one is a state secretary in the Ministry of Health," he said and pointed to the screen. "This is the director of health, the hospital director and she is the director the Cancer Society.

– Who is this?" asked Kjell, pointing to a name on the screen.

– I think that's Sigrid's doctor, the girl with cancer," replied Aksel. Kjell clicked on the document.

Pete Howick, Druen, Aker Brygge, March 23, it said at the top. It was a report from a dinner she had had with the doctor.

– Howick, said Kjell, reading down the document. - Pete Howick?

– Yes. Aksel looked questioningly at Kjell, "Do you know him? I think Kajsa once mentioned that he's Norwegian-American, at least educated in the US.

Kjell scrolled further down the page. At the very bottom, Kajsa had written down her thoughts after her meeting with Howick: A doctor who gives everything for his patients, skilled, almost nerdy about his profession, meticulous, accurate, caring. Similar?

– She's obviously impressed with this doctor," said Karsten.

– What were the main points in the profile of the double murderer? Kjell cast a questioning glance at Aksel.

– He's smart, high IQ, probably highly educated, unusually methodical and systematic, nerdy about what he does, single.

– Skilled, meticulous, nerdy," Kjell read and looked thoughtfully at the screen.

– What do you mean?" asked Karsten.

– No, I don't know ... Kjell replied - Nerdy about his profession ... specialist ...

He turned eagerly towards Aksel and Karsten: "Howick, his name is Howick. Can't you hear it?

– Hear ?" asked Aksel impatiently.

– Howick!

Aksel looked annoyed at Kjell. "Say what you're thinking, then," he exclaimed irritably.

– "Shit," exclaimed Karsten. He grabbed his cell phone.

Aksel stared at the name. - What? He looked impatiently at Kjell.

– Hovik, said Kjell with a Norwegian pronunciation - Peter, Pete, Peder.

Howick, Hovik ...?

– You mean ... Høvik? Peder-André ...

Karsten was already giving his instructions on the mobile: - Check where he lives. Yes, Pete Howick. And alibi check him right away. Was he at work at the weekend, is he at work now? And most importantly: Where does he live?

Aksel signaled to Karsten that he wanted to say something. Karsten asked the person at the other end to wait and looked at him questioningly.

– "Maybe he's an American citizen?" said Aksel.

– The man may be a US citizen, contact the American government, find out where he comes from, his background, his studies, his family. Everything! I want to know everything about this man," Karsten said loudly into the phone.

– Could he be Peder-André Høvik," said Aksel. "Is he the one who took Kajsa, is he the one who killed Alfhild and Jørgen Godø? Their son's best friend, his escape buddy? A doctor? Yes, that's right. Ketamine, drugs, morphine, severed hands ...

35

– Attention , we have a breakthrough!

It was half past nine on Tuesday evening. Karsten, Aksel and Kjell had thrown themselves into the car. Now they were sitting with the other investigators.

Karsten looked down at some papers on the table in front of him - Peder- André Høvik became an American citizen in 1980, his passport is issued in an American version of his name, he has dropped André and calls himself Peter, or Pete Howick. He graduated as a doctor in 1986, trained as a cancer specialist, also in the US, and came to Norway to take up a position at Rikshospitalet in 1992.

Karsten looked out over the crowd - "Howick lives in an apartment at Lysaker Brygge. We are currently in the process of moving in.

At the same time, his phone rang. The room was completely silent when he answered.

Aksel sat forward on the chair, his heart rate increased, he was breathing fast. - Yes?" replied Karsten. - Really? Well, no. Okay. He hung up the phone. Then he rubbed his eyes tiredly. Aksel knew before he said anything. He didn't say anything. Howick wasn't there. No sign of Kajsa. Aksel got up and went to the bathroom. He stood in front of the sink with his head bowed, then he turned on the tap, filled his hands and put his face into the lukewarm water, again and again.

He unlocked the door to the stall and asked Kajsa to follow him.

– Where are we going?" she asked.

He didn't answer, just handed her the clothes and told her to lie down in the back seat of the car. She lay perfectly still. He locked the doors and adjusted the mirror so he could keep an eye on her. He didn't think she'd do anything stupid, she'd behaved quite exceptionally over the past 24 hours. But he couldn't be sure.

He turned off the lights on the car well before he passed the last houses. It was a clear evening, the moon was almost full and lit up the road and the forest.

At one end of the stable there was a small garage. He got out, locked the car and opened the old double door. The hinges screeched. Then he drove in and turned off the engine.

– Where are we?" she asked.

– Come, he replied and opened the door for her.

They went out into the open space in front of the house, and he took her by the arm. - No, she said, - not in there, please! Her voice was as thin as a child's.

– Don't worry, we're not going in there, we're going there," he said, pointing to the forest.

Aksel noticed it as soon as he returned to the room with all the investigators. The atmosphere was excited, characterized by disruption.

– What's going on?" he asked.

Karsten pointed to Marianne Lyche, a female investigator in her fifties, whom Aksel knew well. "He bought a house in Ankerveien last week," she said.

– The spotters are on their way," Karsten added.

– "I want to go there!" said Aksel and grabbed his jacket.

– Wait, it may take some time before we can move in. It's no use, you ...

– Don't try to stop me, Karsten. I know she's there. She HAS to be there!

– "Okay, but we need to wait and see if the emergency response team should move in. We need to scout the house first.

– Okay, okay, okay. But I want to be there when they move in.

They walked through the forest - he didn't hold her, didn't pull her along, her hand had a firm grip on his.

They led each other.

They walked a short distance on the well-trodden path, but soon turned off and the darkness grew thicker around them. They were off the beaten track, it was difficult to get around, but he led her safely, he knew the forest like the back of his hand.

The shelter was built into the terrain, and he was proud of it. It was located next to a steep slope. An old tree had fallen over and he used it as a starting point, first laying large branches between the tree and the rock, then adding smaller branches and twigs on top before covering it with spruce bark.

Inside, he had made a bed out of spruce needles. Now he unfolded the two sleeping bags and asked Kajsa to lie down in one of them.

He took out a thermos of blackcurrant toddy. He had not yet finished telling Kajsa everything. But now he was nearing the end. He felt a mixture of joy and sadness. Joy that she knew, that everything had gone as he had planned. Sadness that it would soon be over.

36

Time passed excruciatingly slowly. Karsten and Aksel sat in the car and waited a few hundred meters from the house, where the Delta cars and an ambulance were also parked. They watched on the radio. The spotters had kept the house under surveillance before they decided to move in. There were no signs of life.

Aksel had a pulse of two hundred. He wrapped both arms around his body to keep from shivering; he felt frozen to the marrow of his bones, despite it being a relatively warm spring evening.

He heard men shouting, he couldn't understand any of it. Then there was silence. For a long time.

They've found Kajsa, he thought. She is dead. It's there - because they're so quiet.

Then someone called Karsten. - Yes? His voice was strained. Aksel looked at him, trying decipher his facial expression. All he saw was a face that was gray and grim. He's just as tired as me, Aksel thought.

He had never seen Karsten like this before, despite all the cases they had worked on together. The case is personal to him, he thought. He saw Karsten move his mouth, but the sound was gone. Time stood still.

A man came out of the house next to the car with a garbage bag in his hand. He walked over to the rubbish bin and threw the bag in, stopped and looked curiously at Aksel and Karsten, at the big black cars of the emergency services and the ambulance. Then he turned and went back inside.

He was just taking out the trash.

Aksel looked at Karsten, who was pressing his index finger and thumb against the bridge of his nose while squeezing his eyes tightly shut. He also cares about Kajsa, they had meetings, they had dinner, he thought as Karsten said: - Did you get that?

– No ...

– Howick is not there. Kajsa is not there.

A weight pressed him hard against the seat. - Where the hell are they then? he screamed and hit the dashboard.

– So this is where it started," he said.

– "Yes, I understand that," she said.

– Yes, I guess you do.

– What do you remember from your childhood?

– Just a few glimpses; a sandbox, a tricycle, I get to sit on the horse, the warmth of the barn ...

– Do you remember Njål?

– Yes, I remember Njål. And Birte. She was kind to me. And I remember the day I was picked up.

– What happened?

– remember standing on the stairs my father.

– Your mother?

– She wasn't there. My father said I had to go with the nice lady, but I would be back home soon.

– This with the hands ..., she began.

He stood up on his elbow and looked at her in surprise. - Do you know that?

– Yes, I did. Is that why you switched them around? Give him equal blame?

– You're pretty good, you know that?" he said, smiling at her.

– Yes he was the "good guy" in the first place. She was the one who had the most responsibility for me, it was her fault what happened, that I was sent to an orphanage, what happened there. If she had been a good mother, everything would have been different.

– But your father...

– He let them take me, he didn't stop them, I think he was relieved. And he didn't keep his promise to me.

– To bring you back?

– Yes, he did. That's why he let me down just as much.

Ten minutes later, Aksel and Karsten stood in the doorway of the shed in the house on Ankerveien.

– Have you found anything?" asked Aksel. "She's been here, I can feel it," he said, looking towards the mattress on the floor.

– Well, at least someone has been lying on that mattress. Karsten walked into the room.

It was cold. He walked right up to the mattress, then knelt down and stuck his nose right down to the pillow. He looked like a Muslim in prayer. He sniffed hard and straightened his back.

– Yes, Kajsa has been here. Eternity," he added by way of explanation.

– "You know what she smells like," said

Aksel. Karsten did not reply.

One of the investigators came in to see them. "Can you take a look at this," he said, addressing Aksel and holding up a plastic bag.

Aksel took it and held it up to the light.

– "It's Thea's," he said. "She's got some of these, with ladybirds on them. Kajsa must have had it in her hair ...

They lay quietly next to each other. He had removed a bit of the ceiling so that they could see the treetops high above them, and above that again; the sky, star-studded.

He felt relieved that it was almost over.

– There's one thing I don't understand," she said.

– Å?

– How did you become the person you are today?

– Don't you get it?

– You survived?

– Yes?

– But ...

– It was Peder-André who fell .

– You went ashore as Peder-André?

– Yes.

– But didn't the embassy check your passport?

– Sure, but the picture was blurred because it had gotten wet. Besides, we looked alike. The embassy people didn't know me, and they had no reason to check with the captain as long as I had a passport.

– And then you changed your name in the US?

– Shifted and shifted, I just got them to write it in an American way. There is no island in English.

– But the passport for Peder-André ...

-... I laid on a bridge over the Thames in London when I was there for a medical congress.

– What is it?

He listened, all his senses heightened. He leaned out through the opening and stood like that for several minutes before returning to his sleeping bag. - I heard something, it must have been an animal.

37

Aksel woke up with a jolt. He looked at the clock radio. Five to two. Bibbi had come home with the children while he was away. He couldn't bear to go to bed alone. He had asked her to put them in the double bed, and as soon as Bibbi had left, he had put himself between them.

It was the phone that woke him up. The house phone. the middle of the night. Something had happened. He jumped out of bed and into the hallway, grabbed the receiver. - Yes! he shouted. - Hello?

– Is that Kajsa's husband?" said a female voice.

– Yes?

– Yes, please excuse me for calling in the middle of the night.

– Who are you?

– This is Birte Kristiansen.

– Really? Suddenly he was awake.

– Yes, you see, I couldn't sleep, and even though it's nighttime, I thought it might be important, and then I couldn't sleep anyway, so I got up and thought about it, and ...

– ?" he interrupted.

– Yes, you can see that Njål has been very restless in recent days. I can tell when something's bothering him. He's usually completely calm when it's just me and him here, so ...

Aksel sighed and interrupted her again. - Why was he worried?

– Yes, that's exactly what I was wondering too. Last night there was a policeman here, and afterwards Njål just sat and rocked

back and forth and bit his finger. "Yes, he does that when he gets scared or insecure, you see," she added.

– Really?

– Yes, and late last night he went out, I stayed up late into the night waiting for him, he's just come home. Now he's completely out of it.

– Why is that?

– Yes, at first he didn't want to say anything, but then he said that Kajsa isn't gone.

– Not gone?

– "Yes, the policeman who was here said that Kajsa is gone. But she's not," says Njål.

– Did he say anything else?

– Kajsa is in the forest, he said.

– In the forest? Her heart rate increased.

– Yes, that's what he said.

– Did he say where in the forest she is?" he asked breathlessly.

– No, and you know ... he'seen her jogging around here a few times, that's probably what he means. Don't you think? Njål tends to mix things up, you see.

He sensed that the calm was about to leave him. "Can I hold your hand?" he said.

She didn't answer, but he slipped his hand into hers.

He was so tired. Tired of not being who he was, tired of , tired of planning, tired of executing. But it had been worth it, because now she was lying here next to him and knew everything.

– Why did they have to die?

– Why? He turned his head and looked at her uncomprehendingly.

– Yes, why kill them, there are other ways punish someone?

– Death was not the goal. It was only a means. The goal was fear.

– Is that why you held them captive? Why you used my keta?

– Yes, for them to feel the fear, for a long time. They should suffer as I suffered. I wanted them to feel what it's like to be in the dark, to feel their bodies break down without hope.

She did not answer.

– "I'm not afraid of dying," he added, "Death is a friend.
Death is most important thing we do in life.

38

When Aksel arrived at the farm, the yard in front of the house was full of Delta cars, two ambulances, police dogs and police officers. He noticed that the emergency squad was already standing ready to follow the dog patrol, which would be sent into the area first.

– Here! Coffee, said Karsten and handed him a cup.

– "Thank you," said Aksel, "and thank you for sending this policewoman to be with the children.

– I understand that you want to be here, but this can take time.

– Anything is better than sitting at home and waiting, Aksel replied. He pointed towards the stables: - Is that Howick's car? A policeman let a dog sniff something inside the car.

– Yes, or Peder-André Høvik's.

– So Kajsa is in there?" he said, looking towards the forest.

– We assume that.

Aksel looked at the ambulance. It's for Kajsa, he thought. Would she be ... No, he didn't have to think about that.

– Did you get anything out of Njål?" he asked.

– No, he's locked himself in his room and refuses to come out. But we have a policeman there trying to get him out. We'll have to rely on the dogs. We're also considering heat-seeking helicopters.

The incident commander and a couple of men from the emergency response team were leaning over a car hood with a large flashlight. They were discussing eagerly, occasionally talking on the intercom. Aksel got into the car and waited.

When Kajsa had fallen asleep, he took the small box out of his backpack. He did it as quietly as he could so that she wouldn't wake up. He pulled out the syringe, held it up, clicked it and squeezed out some of the liquid. It was hard to see, but it didn't matter if he squirted out too much, it was enough anyway. He turned around.

to Kajsa to make sure she was asleep.

She lay perfectly still, her eyes wide open. - Don't ... she cried, - I don't want to die ... my children ... should my children lose their mother, grow up without me? How can you do this? Please, please, please, please, she cried, - don't do it, Arvid.

Arvid. She called him Arvid. Yes,

now it was complete.

He put his hand over her mouth. Her eyes . She breathed hard through her nose.

– "Don't cry," he said, "there's nothing more to cry about now. There will never be anything more to cry about.

He removed his hand from her mouth.

– "I have to tell you something," she hiccupped. "We're not finished, not everything has been said.

He looked at her in surprise. - ?

– I think you're a father.

– Dad? He looked at her uncomprehendingly.

– Yes, it was. Ida had a daughter, Ine-Marie.

– Ine-Marie?

– Ida must have gotten pregnant around the time you escaped. I checked Ine-Marie's birthday, she was born nine months after you escaped.

A daughter. Had Ida become pregnant? - It's too late, he said wearily. - Too late. It doesn't matter anymore.

– "It's never too late," she said.

– Yes," he said and lay down next to her.

Then he stuck the syringe in with a quick movement.

Fifty minutes had passed and Aksel was alternating between hope and despair when Karsten came running.

– What's going on?" asked Aksel.

– Let's go!

There was a crackle in the connection. "Both objects located," said a voice.

– Condition?

Aksel doesn't know how many seconds it is quiet, it feels like many minutes.

– Man dead, he then hears.

– And Kajsa?

Again there is silence. Aksel feels his legs give out from under him, notices Karsten grabbing him, holding him up.

– Kajsa is alive," he hears the voice on intercom. "We're on our way to meet the paramedics. Send them in. Quickly.

He can't believe that someone can utter these words in a voice as calm as if he were a tram conductor.

Karsten's fingers dig into his shoulder. "Kajsa is alive, Aksel, she's alive," he whispers.

– The head of the emergency response team repeats.

Everyone is standing around the car now; police officers, paramedics, they're a whole gang.

It is completely silent.

Seconds pass. An eternity. Aksel holds his breath. Everyone holds their breath. Then comes the answer: - Unharmed. At least physically, the voice adds.

Then Aksel sinks to his knees.

– Is mom coming home soon?

Anders and Thea are sitting at the breakfast table the next morning.

Anders looks questioningly at his father.

Aksel is standing by the sink with VG in his hand; he doesn't want the children to see the newspaper.

A large, grainy photo, obviously taken with a telephoto lens, adorns the cover. He and Karsten walk on either side of the stretcher with Kajsa. SURVIVED FIVE DAYS OF SERIAL MURDER

REN, it says.

He opens the newspaper and skims the text. "The well-known Kanal 4 journalist Kajsa Coren was unharmed when the emergency services found her last night in a wooded area not far from the scene of the double murders in Asker in March. As far as VG is aware, the man who had abducted her is the same man who killed the married couple Alfhild and Jørgen Godø. Last night, the police would not release any further information other than that the perpetrator had taken his own life."

He places the newspaper face down on the bench.

– Yes, , mommy is coming home.

– "I want to go to mommy now," says Thea defiantly.

– Mom will be here this afternoon, you'll have to wait until then," replies Aksel.

Thea starts jumping up and down - I want my mommy now! She stands up and Aksel jumps in as she loses her balance. He holds her tightly in his arms and she bends in anger. - Stupid dad. I want my mommy now!" she shouts, beating her little fists against her father's chest.

Aksel holds her firmly, her hair tickles her face, she smells of shampoo and liver pate. Then he meets Anders' gaze. He sets Thea down on the floor.

– Are you crying?" he says, squatting down and putting his arm around his son's shoulders.

– I was so scared of my mom.

Aksel strokes his hair. - Why were you afraid?

– So that she would never come back.

– But ...

– You said she was in Spain. But she wasn't. You lied.

Anders looks accusingly at his father.

– How do you know that?

– My grandmother thought I was asleep, but then I got up and my mom was watching the news on TV and crying. There were pictures of my mom, and they said she was gone, that someone had taken her.

– When did you see it on TV?

– The first night at grandma's.

– But now there's nothing more to be afraid of," says Aksel.

– Where is she?

– In the hospital.

– Is she sick?

– No, she was just going to rest there tonight. She's fine now.

Anders wipes his eyes with the back of his hand and gets up from the table. - Can mom pick me up today?

– Yeah, maybe. If not, she'll be here when you get back from school.

– Are you sure? Cross your heart and hope to die?

– Yes, a cross on the neck," Aksel replies and draws a cross on his chest. "I'm going to the hospital to pick her up now," he says and stands up. He looks hesitantly at his son, worried that he 't go.

– "Okay," says Anders and goes out into the hallway to dressed.

– Do you want to?" asks Aksel, relieved. - Do you like going to school?

– I've made a new friend. His name is Thorbjørn and he's in my parallel class.

– That's great.

– He also doesn't like to play football.

– Don't like to play soccer? All boys play football.
And you even have your dad as a coach.

– Mom has said that you shouldn't be involved in something you don't like. Anders looks defiantly at his father.

– Did she tell you that?

– Yes, and when my mom comes home I can stop playing soccer.

– "Yeah, yeah, it'll probably be whatever mum decides," Aksel replies with a sigh. But he shakes Anders by the hair and smiles.

Afterword

It's easy to think that an author - who works as a journalist on a daily basis - knows more than most about events and people in Norwegian politics and society.

I therefore find it appropriate to emphasize that this book is fiction. When easily recognizable people and events form a backdrop for the story in the book, these are based on already publicly available information. What goes beyond this is solely the result of my imagination. I have also taken advantage of the author's fictional freedom to place people and events in a different time and context than in reality.