

Not Different from the Others

A Novel

by

Markus Vinzent

All characters, persons and places are fictitious (with the exception of historically and geographically documented ones, which have been fictionalised). Any resemblance to living or deceased persons or actual events is purely coincidental. Many elements of the novel were developed from documents and accounts listed in the bibliography at the end of the book.

Dramatis personae

Zentrale Figuren

Anika Maschka — Art historian, philosopher and literary scholar

Dr. Tamar Serach — Senior police official; protagonist

Clara Stein, geb. Wendelin — her friend

Lea Auerbach, geb. Serach — Dr Tamar Serach's sister

Ernst Auerbach — Lea's husband

Dr. Jakob Rosenhain — Sexologist

Paul Linden — one of his partners

Dr. Akira Morimoto — his other partner

Wilhelm Hartung — Publicist

Arthur Kleinow — his partner

Dr. Dr. Chaim Mavet — Physician, Medical Councillor, employee of the Jewish Community of Berlin, member of the board of the Reich Association of Jews, director of the Jewish Children's Hospital in Berlin

And several historical Figures (*fictionalised in the novel*)

To be honest, one must know.

To be brave, one must understand.

To be just, one must not forget.

—Ernst Toller

Chapter 1: Explorations

Alone in Berlin

Anika stared at the advertisement.

What I did not yet know then, she told herself, became clearer to me towards the end: Dr Tamar Serach, the woman whose traces I was following through the Berlin archives, had risked her life—with a single newspaper advertisement.

11 October 1926.

Tamar had been forced to wait until that Monday morning, and waiting had not come easily.

Then, out of nowhere, came firm footsteps. Not the little tapping steps of the woman in the neighbouring flat, nor the dragging feet of the elderly tenant upstairs; nor did they resemble the cautious creeping of the inquisitive concierge. The flap above the letter slot was already lifting when an envelope, grey like the one that had brought *The Companion* the week before, slid through.

More impetuously than usual, she reached for the packet. She did not dare open the door to see whether her neighbour had been watching the postman and therefore drew the bundle into the flat more slowly than she would have liked. Before it had even reached the table, she had torn it open lengthwise and stared, flushed and apprehensive, at several envelopes protruding from the wrapper.

The first was an even darker grey than the packet from which she had drawn it. No sender.

Eagerly, she slit it open along the edge with a sharp knife, glanced at the abbreviated return address and pulled out a short letter.

She began to read:

Dear Madam,

Your advertisement leaves no room for doubt. I know women like you.

Discretion goes without saying. I set the tone—my girlfriends are accustomed to that.

Meetings at my place only.

If you mean what you write, you know what to do.

E.

Dr Serach lowered the note.

Was that the kind of response her advertisement invited?

No, she thought. This was not how she had imagined the future. She was not looking for a prostitute. She did not want merely to cross from one camp into another.

Unsettled, she took from the locked drawer of her desk the text of the advertisement she had submitted three days earlier:

Even in Berlin one can be lonely. Young, full-figured woman in her thirties therefore seeks, by this means, the company of a working, dominant female friend. Replies to Box 1419, publishers.

Tamar read what she had typed once more, quietly to herself. Proud that she had overcome her hesitation, trembling at what she might have set in motion and what might now lie ahead. She had wondered whether this gamble would produce any response at all.

Now the first results lay before her.

She did not dare open the next letter.

She pushed the first reply aside, then the wrapper containing the others. Sat down at the kitchen table, reached for her cup of tea, picked up her fountain pen again and returned to the letter she had interrupted when the postman pushed the anonymous packet through the slot in her door. She had known immediately that these must be the first responses to her advertisement in *The Companion*. Perhaps the new issue containing the advertisement itself had been enclosed as well.

The unfinished letter lay before her, but she could no longer concentrate on its lines. Instead her eyes wandered to the edge of the table, to that inconspicuous bearer of messages from the future.

Keys?

She wondered which doors they might fit: low doors, narrow ones, elegant, shabby, blind, even disreputable ones? Her thoughts strayed into the future, resisting the urge to open those different doors yet poking through them all the same, into the corridors beyond, towards the walls; searching out their colours, feeling the surfaces of the wallpaper, growing curious about the pictures hanging there, testing whether they were originals or prints, comparing the faded with the luminous, measuring the distance to the next door. Suddenly she caught the scent of cedarwood. Musk mingled with it, then lemongrass. The next door—the elegant one—surprised her with the mustiness she had last endured in her grandmother's bedroom.

Would it not be safer, she wondered, to cancel the subscription and buy each new issue from a kiosk in Schöneberg instead? But she feared that doing so would expose her still more to discovery and denunciation.

Too dangerous in her position.

Feeling a little lost, yet increasingly excited, she returned to the letter she had been writing, unable to shake off the images and smells. First she reread its opening:

Dear Tate,

Although nothing is official yet, my superior informed me at our annual review that, in recognition of my conscientious work, I am to be promoted as one of the first women to the rank of Polizeirätin in Berlin and Prussia. They are merely awaiting written ministerial approval; the placet has already been given orally. As before, I am to supervise matters concerning juvenile crime, public morality, and the welfare of women and girls, but a further area is now to be added: the regulation of those affected by §175. I think you and Mame may once again be proud of this next step in my life.

It was here that she had broken off, feverishly rushing to the door and throwing herself upon the unknown.

Her own impetuosity had frightened her.

She did not recognise it in herself.

Nor did she want to permit it.

She dipped her fountain pen into the inkwell before her. Let the nib drip. Then, once she felt able to trust the stroke of the pen again, she continued:

All the effort I put into studying law and economics, and the drudgery of my doctoral dissertation, have paid off—but without your suggestion that I write my dissertation on police administration and public morality, the possibility of such a promotion would scarcely have arisen. Tate, you are not only a lawyer and publisher, but something of a prophet as well, someone who knows the temper of international politics and the Berlin administration inside out.

*A sheynem dank. Give my love to Mame,
Your Tamar*

She read the letter through once more. It was only a few lines, yet her parents would not be disappointed. Still, she knew they worried that she continued to have no relationship with a man and therefore offered no prospect of marriage or children; indeed, her new professional position would probably only deepen their uncertainty.

It was surely one of the great disappointments she had caused them thus far.

Images from her twenties returned to her. During those years her parents had several times invited to the house a young Jewish businessman who had built a flourishing concern importing fruit through Königsberg and Berlin. In her father's judgement he embodied the obvious future: reliable, educated, from a good family—a man who seemed suited to Tamar and could offer her financial security if she devoted herself to building a family rather than pursuing a career.

Tamar had not rejected his courtship, but neither had she accepted it.

Had not wanted to accept it.

When the successful young man eventually began to speak of an engagement, she told him calmly, though firmly, that she wanted to work first, perhaps enter social welfare, but in any case did not intend immediately to become a wife and mother. He would have to understand that; and if he was set on having a family, he would be better advised to find someone else.

His disappointment was considerable, though apparently not insurmountable. Only a few weeks later she heard through the wider family that another young lady had been found who was prepared to serve the young entrepreneur.

Her parents could make little sense of her decision.

To reject such an auspicious step in life, one they themselves had prepared.

Without even consulting them.

She hoped that the lines of her letter might suggest to her father why she wanted to live—and did live—as she did. In a letter to her sister Lea, she complained of how painful it was that their mother had shown no interest in “the questions” raised by her dissertation, while her father had confined himself to commenting on legal niceties and correcting typographical errors, and that with both of them she had “all the more reason to remain silent about the other matter.”

She ended by generalising:

“It is sad—the sad fate of two generations.”

Lea evidently knew of her sister's inclination.

Already Tamar was worrying about how she would explain matters to her parents if her advertisement received a reply. Better not to ask that question now, she thought. Still less to answer it. First the official business. The other: later.

Her life seemed to have taken two giant strides in one.

Although she found it difficult to turn her attention back to police work, she took up a report on which she was required to give her opinion:

Application to the Police President for permission to wear women's clothing—renewed request.

In March 1922 one of your officers informed me orally that, on grounds of public order, I would not be granted permission to wear women's clothing and that action might even be taken against me should I be found dressed as a woman. I wish, however, to bring to your attention what occurred in our district this past weekend.

In the morning, a corpulent female figure was found hanging from the emblem above a dance hall. Upon examination, the figure proved to be a man dressed in women's clothing ... The doctors are of the opinion that the stranger committed suicide in a fit of mental derangement—mental derangement? Could this death not have been prevented by the police? I therefore renew the request and application I made several years ago and kindly ask for a favourable reply.

What was she to advise the Police President?

As a matter of law, she could see no grounds for prohibiting the wearing of clothing associated with the other sex. Since the Imperial Penal Code of 1871, §175 had applied only to “unnatural fornication” between men; women were included only in the provision concerning intercourse “between humans and animals.”

From legal practice Dr Serach knew only of convictions involving sexual acts between men resembling intercourse. She referred to the well-known case of the performer Ernst Mittenstedt. He had appeared in court in women's clothes to conduct his defence, and the criminal police had known of his habit without intervening. Indeed, the former head of Berlin's homosexual division, Dr Behrend, had pointed out that wearing the clothing of the other sex was not prohibited by law. In doing so, he supported the term introduced by Dr Magnus Hirschfeld for the practice, *transvestism*: Hirschfeld insisted that it was neither a matter of amusement nor an expression of homosexuality, but that people dressed in the manner that corresponded to them, even when they felt themselves to inhabit the wrong body.

In her opinion she also cited the Berlin decree on the “Treatment of So-Called ‘Transvestites’.” Issued in 1922, it instructed police officers not to arrest such persons without cause. She quoted:

“Leaving male prostitution aside, transvestism is in general of no criminal significance. The opinion still widespread among the public that persons in disguise are criminals in disguise—pickpockets, spies, traffickers in women, and the like—is without foundation.”

Nor, she continued, should such people simply be described as homosexual. If they were stopped by the police, their details could be recorded, but they should be issued with a *Transvestitenschein*, certifying that “everything lay within respectable bounds.”

What, Dr Serach wondered, was wrong with such a practice? If one could dress up at Carnival, why not on other days?

Did the police not themselves make use of cross-dressing? She cited cases in which officers disguised themselves as women in order to catch *in flagranti* offenders who, late in the evening or at night, lay in wait in Berlin parks for elderly women, intending to attack them and steal their handbags and purses.

It would never have occurred to Tamar herself to wear men's clothes as her sister Lea did. All day long she was compelled to present herself formally at the office. A dark, severely cut, close-fitting suit, buttoned high, without jewellery—a uniform without being a uniform, revealing less of who she was than preventing others from deciding what she might be.

Not masculine. A woman: yes. Seductive: no. Police.

Still disappointed by the first response to her advertisement, she hardly dared pick up the remaining envelopes and open them. Then a longing for the unknown came over her, one she could no longer contain.

She wanted to detach the one key that fitted from the ring.

She reached for the next grey lot, dug another offer from its envelope and counted those that remained.

Two—three—four—five.

There was still hope, although she feared it would diminish with every number.

Dear Madam,

I have read your advertisement and believe myself suitable, as I am employed and reliable. I should be pleased to learn further particulars.

Yours respectfully,

M. K.

At first reading, the lines did not strike her unfavourably. “Employed,” “reliable”—those words appealed to her. Yet somehow they sounded smooth, almost flat.

She did not want a mirror of her working life. She was looking for resistance. What lay before her seemed devoid of tension—and uneducated besides.

Dear Unknown Lady,

the word “dominant” made me hesitate—and for that very reason made me write.

Perhaps we do not mean the same thing.

Perhaps we do.

F.

She placed this letter on top. F.'s willingness to reveal her uncertainty impressed her. So did the fact that she had picked up on “dominant,” a word Dr Serach had deliberately placed in the advertisement.

Dear Madam,

*I am not writing because I am accustomed to bearing responsibility—
including for what others surrender to me—*

but because responsibility is the foundation of friendship.

If you reply, write only when.

C. W.

Dr Serach was confused. So many voices, several of them speaking directly to something in her.

From morning till night, in the office, with her colleagues, offenders and enforcement officers, she was required to take command, issue instructions, order detentions. Successfully, as the steep rise of her career demonstrated.

But when she closed the door behind her in the evening, she wanted to be able to let go, to hand the reins to someone she could trust.

For her, intimacy meant being entirely enveloped.

She put F.'s letter aside as well. Uncertainty and risk had never attracted her; she did not want the positions within a relationship left unresolved. She picked up C. W.'s letter again.

There was no pressure in it.

It promised nothing.

It offered a willingness to take responsibility.

Dr Serach arranged the letters as she ordinarily arranged files, according to rank.

C. W. she placed first. With her fountain pen she wrote, though not without twice setting the nib down and lifting it again over each initial:

Dear C. W.,

How about Friday, 15 October.

She had deliberately decided against a question mark. And against an exclamation mark. She wanted to leave only one thing open—Where?

Her pen stopped.

The first place that came to mind was Café Josty on Potsdamer Platz. There they would sit among a crowd of other guests: businessmen, shoppers, travellers. She had often been there alone, yet even two women sitting together at a table might attract attention. They would be seen, perhaps even noticed. Nor could they simply disappear.

Halfway between T. S. and C. W.

She rejected the idea because she did not want a tentative first encounter, no game of power and posture. With the advertisement she had already leaned far out of the window of her flat and of the habits of her life. But she wanted to leave her zone of safety, to expose herself to someone who might appear more self-assured than she herself would feel.

And she wanted them to sit closer together, perhaps even somewhat more intimately than they could at Josty. She added:

Friday, 15 October, 5 p.m.

Café Vaterland, Potsdamer Platz. Side room.

She did not sign with her full name.

T.

Only after she had folded the letter and slipped it into the envelope did she notice that her hand was no longer trembling. Not from courage. But because she had made a decision that bound her. Whatever the cost.

The Attack

Dr Serach folded her reply to C. W. She placed it beside the advertisement and ran her fingertips over the faint impression the fountain-pen nib had left in the paper. She followed the sweeps of her handwriting, which towards the end had grown increasingly light, then more noticeably restrained.

Was that a moan, a sigh, or merely an exhalation?

She wavered between pride and the sense of having overcome herself. What would she have given at that moment to know what she had set in motion. Once more she traced the lines of her handwriting and recoiled slightly at the weight with which she had planted the final full stop after the T.

Despite the hundred years between us, as I sat in Berlin before these replies to the advertisement, reading at the same time Tamar's personal account of that moment, I could feel something of its weight. All the more because I knew what her step, her decision to enter through that door, would come to mean for her, for C. W.—and for me today:

20 January 2025, Washington, D.C.

Protecting Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government.

I read those lines several times, although a few months earlier I had sworn that I would no longer expose myself to political literature of this kind, or indeed to the constant drizzle of propaganda at all. But in the light of Tamar's story it forced itself upon me, and I knew there was no shielding myself from it.

Especially since my reading of Tamar was writing itself into my present.

By the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America ... it is hereby ordered ...

Two sexes. Immutable. As though there had never been a Tamar, a Hirschfeld, or all the others. As though no one had ever considered that people might live differently from the way states require them to.

I slipped the sheet into a book by Jakob Rosenhain lying on the table before me. The struggle over bodies and sex was older than this government. Much older.

My evening dress hung before me. Inviting me. It nestled softly against my skin as I slipped it over my body. I had the sensation of gliding along another person's skin.

Valery had sent me an invitation, typically English, on silk paper:

To Anika from Valery.

She knew how to shape language and letters. To prepare for my date with her, I applied my make-up to complement the colours of the satin dress that fell all the way to my feet. The mirror revealed that the fabric opened at the thigh.

As I stepped out of the bathroom, my eyes fell involuntarily on the black lines of the white sheet that had occupied me earlier, the political scribbling that struck me as cheap propaganda, far from being a red rag to me, more like the shabby scrap of a claim to power already in decline.

Why, I wondered as I checked my lipstick, does a man whose power has rubbed itself against women's bodies want to protect me from people who live beyond the binary distinction between male and female, women born in male bodies who nevertheless—like me—feel themselves to be women? How can such a man speak of “protecting women” when he condemns my attraction to women as well? Where does he derive his “biological facts” from? I shook my head, took the sheet of paper and decided to ask Valery what, from her English perspective, she made of these developments in the United States. Would she still make her planned conference trip to Chicago in this political climate?

I knew the biography of Dr Magnus Hirschfeld, who as early as the beginning of the twentieth century had written extensively about the biological predisposition to homosexuality and had already fought claims of the kind made in the American pamphlet. In the story of his life I had encountered the beginnings of the campaign against §175 in Germany and against the perhaps still harsher §129 in Austria, which included women.

I placed the text inside the Hirschfeld book and put both into my bag—more than enough material for our conversation after the theatre, I thought.

As in Hirschfeld's time, so in America now. The apparatus: files, diagnoses, terminology.

At that moment I felt humiliated. For myself and for people of generations past. And yet there had been the Hirschfelds, the Rosenhains, the Hartungs, who had courageously stood up for trans people and those who lived between categories. Society had not been black and white, shaped solely by conservatives and radicals or, on the other side, by the Left, with the bourgeoisie somewhere in between, as the world had been presented to me at home.

In my survey of the relevant publications of the 1920s, I encountered a different past—a wave, particularly in Germany but also in France and England, that revolted against Biedermeier respectability and the artificiality of prevailing ideas of the human being. Leading figures refused to conceal their bodies as society demanded, understanding them instead as vessels for the healing powers of sun and wind, as part of the rhythm of nature. An enthusiasm for the natural challenged moral prescriptions, drove young people and adults into the open air, created youth movements devoted to sport and to the national consciousness associated with it. Yet racist ideas were bound up with these movements as well.

That surprised and troubled me.

It did not explain how such ideas could have intoxicated my father, but they allowed me to glimpse how the youth movement had led him towards a national enthusiasm that eventually made him part of the Movement. None of this history had been revealed to me by him or by my mother during my childhood and youth. Existing in the shadows, that attitude had perhaps

silently infected my brothers as well, strengthening them in the way they approached me, in what they did. Racism always fastens upon bodies. Male bodies—and still more upon female ones.

Everyone knows such a body. You touch it, become addicted to it, strike it, do with it whatever you please, and then want to triumph over it as well, to file it away in a drawer and keep it there.

Precisely because the body possesses greater symbolic force than marching columns, than the flags lining their route, than their anthems.

Racist books are often books about bodies, picture books too. Homophobic racism turns them into albums of visual riddles. The size of cigarette-card albums. *Germany Awakens*—a portrait of the body.

Himmler declared homosexual men a plague and a threat to the “strength of the Volk.” Women, by contrast, were fuel intended to keep that national strength burning. From 1942 onwards, in around ten of the major concentration camps, he established brothels not for the SS but for male prisoners required to serve in privileged supervisory roles: a perverse combination—victims made victims of victims, and for victims.

Images of women displaying “insufficient feminine charms,” Himmler maintained, drove the “male state” towards homosexuality.

No one could have accused Dr Tamar Serach, whom we shall soon come to know more closely, of lacking feminine charms, even though she was searching for a female partner. And yet women like her did not come under scrutiny to the same degree as homosexual men—though women were never safe.

Least of all when they combined Jewishness and homosexuality within themselves: to the National Socialists, they were the devil’s witches.

Nothing would do here but hammer and blows. History has another name for it. Macbeth crept into my senses, under my skin. Witches live on, longer than those whose lives they sketch out. Those who proclaim a thousand-year reign often survive only a few years, kill themselves or end on the gallows. Whoever makes himself the man, raises himself up as Führer, crawls into hiding, passes sentence upon himself or, like Nicolae Ceaușescu or Muammar al-Gaddafi, is shot.

No prophet can help here: whoever makes himself king for ever has no queen at his side, unless she holds the dagger in her left hand or the serpent in her sheath.

This was no theoretical lesson, nor one confined to Shakespeare’s stage. The Nazi movement should have known it from its own realities, as I would soon learn from the documents.

In recent years I had immersed myself in the history of National Socialism, beginning with my Cambridge doctorate on the émigré artist Hulda Mannheimer, now some considerable time behind me. After the loss of my long-term male partner and my equally long-standing female companion, I had more recently come together with Valery as my partner and critical reader, herself an art historian like me. And the time since our paths had crossed again had allowed me to live through those losses and turn once more to the older subject. For I had never been able to put the Nazi period behind me. It was too deeply woven into me. It was also a constant subject of discussion with Valery, even though at times she wished I could simply switch off from my work.

Easy to say.

For me it was not work. It was a descent into my own past, into the dark experiences I had endured with my two brothers within the family and, after my parents' deaths, into the disturbing discovery that my father had himself been entangled in the history of National Socialism I was studying.

No, it was not work. It was an attempt to learn how to live with that past. Valery knew that too. And she was trying to carry its weight with me, to make it lighter.

I could have taken the Hirschfeld out of my bag, put on my coat and simply left. I did not. That time was too close to me. Burned into my skin. No tattoo required.

Through Hulda I had come across the Jewish Children's Hospital in Berlin, where she had received her first public commission. After several years of research, I had studied the history of this Jewish institution, as I got to know Dr. Bernstein, the assistant of this hospital, the only such institution to survive the Nazi period and the Second World War. It was while working on the hospital that I encountered the police councillor Martha Mosse and her colleague Tamar Serach.

Serach would not let me go. More was known about Mosse, whereas information about Serach's life and work was difficult to find and often had to be inferred from parallels with Mosse. Yet Tamar, as I discovered, formed a bridge to my earlier work and drew together the different subjects that had occupied me. And she would lead me still deeper into my own history, as I was to discover.

By then I was accustomed to archival work. Since the beginning of my academic career I had worked on the history of the period between the two world wars, particularly on women artists, writers and sculptors, and later on media and institutions. What could be read from the files and papers—and what I believed I could see between the lines—began in 1925.

Serach was thirty-three at the time. She came from a well-known Berlin family of lawyers, yet not even her cousin, the son of a famous publisher who emigrated to America and became a distinguished historian there, mentions her in his autobiography.

She seemed to be a nameless member of the family.

Only after lengthy research in the Berlin State Archive did I find administrative and personnel files relating to Tamar Serach: material on her appointment and promotion, disciplinary proceedings and her dismissal; and in the archive of the Academy of Arts, personal documents from the period before she was driven out of the police service. Then, in the archive of the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, I came across the typed "Recollections" that helped me further. Later I found additional material, including collections of a more personal nature, copies of letters and entries. From these I tried to reconstruct the course of her life and what she had experienced.

One of the earliest pieces of evidence led me, like the conquistadors of the early sixteenth century, to El Dorado—though not to the legendary land of gold in South America.

There, according to Colombian legend, the body of the new ruler was covered in gold dust when he assumed power. The ruler then travelled on a golden raft, laden with objects of gold and precious stones, to the centre of a mountain lake. The gold was cast into the water and the ruler plunged into the lake after it, the gold washing from his body and sinking with the rest of the treasure into the depths.

Here, for Berliners—and not only Berlin men—El Dorado lay much closer.

Likewise enveloped in powder, fabric and tulle, it actually existed, tangible in the heart of the Reich capital: in Charlottenburg, at the corner of Kantstraße and Bleibtreustraße. In 1924 it opened as a dance hall on the upper floor of an older café. By 1926 the *Eldorado* had moved to the corner of Martin-Luther-Straße and Augsburger Straße and, under the same name, invited men and women, homosexuals, *transvestites* and heterosexuals—above all the better classes—to performances by male and female dancers.

One evening Dr Tamar Serach was sent there by her police department to investigate a case of theft. She was also to look into complaints that had been made against the establishment. They came from the *Gemeinschaft der Andern*, an association of “respectable homosexuals” who protested vigorously against “being placed on the same footing as the kind of people who frequent this establishment.” Dr Serach’s responsibilities also included supervision of offences falling under §175 and therefore the question of whether any such offences were being committed at this place of entertainment.

In her preliminary investigations Dr Serach had come across the file of the complainant, Ernst Julius Röhm. As early as 1924 he had been seen in various Berlin nightclubs, among them the *Kleist-Kasino*, the *Silhouette*, the *Internationale Diele* and the *Eldorado* itself. He was said to have had homosexual relations with other men in steam baths, though this had never been conclusively proved against him.

But in 1925 he himself had created an official record of another kind—the case Dr Serach was now required to pursue.

Röhm had reported a male prostitute named Hermann Siegesmund for theft. According to Röhm, the young man had been in his hotel room and stolen his left-luggage ticket in order to take possession of his suitcase.

To get to the bottom of the matter, Dr Serach visited the various establishments, made enquiries and questioned proprietors and patrons, as well as the man Röhm had accused. At the *Eldorado* she immediately struck lucky and was able to take a statement from Siegesmund.

Siegesmund stated that Röhm had invited him to his room on the day in question and had wanted him to stay the night. But when Röhm wanted more than the amorous attentions for which he was supposed to pay him, and tried to pressure him into homosexual intercourse, things had become too dangerous for him. Siegesmund had managed to wrench himself free from Röhm, the powerfully built former soldier, before any such act took place.

Dr Serach placed the case on file but did not pursue the attempted theft any further. Nor did she consider §175 to have been violated.

Only the press laughed at the affair:

*If Berlin by night you roam,
keep a careful eye on what you own!
The police pass quietly by:
they see—and turn a blind eye.*

The SA used the “Röhm affair” to track down homosexual men across the Reich on a large scale, persecute them, break up “homosexual cliques” and declare them “enemies of the state.” For the moment, the maximum penalty under §175 was still limited to five years. In the 1930s it would be increased to as much as ten years’ imprisonment with hard labour, while prosecution

would no longer be confined to anal intercourse but extend to any form of “indecent,” with around 8,000 men convicted each year.

But for now, in Berlin, Dr Serach still had a say in how the law was interpreted.

In Hartung’s Service

13 October 1926.

Reply to C. W. in hand, addressed to the offices of *The Companion*, she went to the main post office at the Alex and bought a stamp. Without hesitation, she posted the letter. Then she entered Police Headquarters to consult the schedule for the day and the week. A colleague greeted her in the corridor.

“Congratulations, Frau Polizeirätin!”

“Oh,” she replied, “is it official already?”

“We were allowed to sign a congratulatory card for you this morning.”

For the first time Dr Serach was embarrassed, something that rarely happened to her. She thanked him and walked straight into her office. Her colleagues rose from their chairs, applauded and congratulated her. And there, indeed, on her desk, above her appointment diary and files, stood a large congratulatory card. Beside it rested a small envelope bearing the sender’s name:

The Prussian Minister of the Interior. Personal.

“Oh, from the Minister himself?”

Her colleagues smiled. She opened the envelope carefully, while the men gathered around her urged her to read the letter aloud.

Fräulein Dr Tamar Serach

Berlin Police Headquarters

Dear Fräulein Dr Serach,

Many thanks for your congratulations on my appointment. I am doubly pleased because I have now been able to secure for you something to which, in my opinion, you have long been entitled. My warmest congratulations on your promotion and appointment as Polizeirätin.

With the highest esteem and kind regards,

Yours most devotedly,

Grzesinski

She was not a woman for speeches. She briefly thanked the approving faces around her and pointed instead to the exceptional nature of what had happened.

“I accept my promotion to Polizeirätin on behalf of the many women serving in the police. With this promotion, Prussia has taken an important step. It is less a recognition of me personally than a recognition of women. For women are pillars of this country not only in their traditional roles; they sustain it in other areas of society as well. This promotion is an affirmation that women have a future in Prussia—and Prussia a future with women.”

Her colleagues applauded her, the only woman in her department apart from Dr Martha Mosse. Dr Mosse, too, congratulated her colleague and was delighted that, now that there were two of them serving as Polizeirätinnen, their department occupied a special position within the Berlin and Prussian police and that together they had formed a spearhead for women.

It was even more than that: an act of female self-assertion within a domain hitherto ruled by men.

Modestly, Dr Serach took her place behind the nameplate bearing her new rank, sorted her files and set off for her first appointment of the day.

She had her eye on Wilhelm Hartung's publishing office in Berlin-Wilhelmshagen, as well as on the physician and widely read author Dr Jakob Rosenhain; afterwards she intended to visit Sylvia Enner, editor of *Frauenfreundschaft*, who was responsible for that and similar periodicals.

The Reich government was working on legislation "to protect young people from trashy and obscene literature." In recent weeks the police in Hamburg had prohibited relevant periodicals such as *The Island*, *Friendship*, *The Friend* and *The Companion* from public street sale, while in Munich the *Friend's Journal* had likewise disappeared from shop windows. Dr Serach had therefore been instructed to conduct a preliminary investigation for Berlin into whether measures should be taken in the capital and, if so, what form they should take.

On the tram towards the Alex and from there on the Stadtbahn to Wilhelmshagen, she read through the notes she had compiled on Wilhelm Hartung over the preceding days.

Hartung was in his early fifties and had been publishing the periodical *The Others* for years. In the police register Dr Serach found an entry from 1900 recording that Hartung had served twelve months in prison for having "symbolically" and "physically" assaulted a member of the Reichstag. In 1905 he had again been sentenced, this time to two months' imprisonment for distributing obscene writings; and in 1907 to a further eighteen months after publicly alleging that Reich Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow was engaged in a homosexual relationship. Dr Serach found still other disclosures and convictions of Hartung's in the files.

What troubled her was that Hartung had been the founding chairman and president of the *Gemeinschaft der Anderen* (*The Society of the Others*) since 1903, an organisation that not only championed homosexual love between men and campaigned for the abolition of §175, but also advocated the continuation of the ancient Greek tradition of love between men and boys.

Why, Dr Serach wondered, was he concerned only with same-sex love between men and not between women as well? Why expose himself to accusations of violating the protection of minors? Why endanger both himself and this association?

Her only reassurance was that Hartung had attracted less public attention since marrying a nurse in 1920.

Hartung was critical of the medical findings of Dr Rosenhain, whose views agreed in almost every detail with those of Dr Hirschfeld. They regarded homosexuality as biologically innate. Dr Serach had underlined passages setting out this view and added in the margin:

"Recognised not only by Hirschfeld and Rosenhain; already in the nineteenth century by the French neurologist Claude François Michéa."

According to Dr Rosenhain's theory, there was no absolute division between male and female. Instead, like Hirschfeld, he proposed sexual intermediate stages, with something

between the two that, as he put it, was *not altogether aptly* described as a middle, *third sex*, as in the title of one of Dr Hirschfeld's books.

What impression would Hartung, Dr Rosenhain and Enner make on her?

Eventually she arrived at Hartung's two-storey family villa in Bismarckstraße and was surprised by the respectable bourgeois property behind its iron fence, complete with a Greek portico and architrave.

Hartung did indeed strike her as different, peculiar, after his wife had opened the door to her—or perhaps not so much peculiar as eccentric. And he wore his eccentricity for all to see. With an expansive gesture, the moustached man, his hair worn like Nietzsche's, invited her through the house and into the garden, where his publishing business and photographic studio occupied a rear building.

Behind a small desk, with a wall of the publisher's books and periodicals behind him and photographic works covering the other walls, sat a young assistant whom Hartung introduced as Arthur Kleinow. His features were soft, his eyes deep-set, his ears close to his head, his hair sticking out in every direction. In contrast to his striking youthful beauty, he held a short pipe, which from time to time he put between his lips as though he had already been smoking one for years, if not—despite his youth—for decades. Whenever the pipe released them, yellow teeth showed through.

"My most faithful support," Hartung added, while Kleinow gazed at him, visibly touched, "especially through all the difficult years the publishing house has already endured."

"Frau Polizeirätin Dr Tamar Serach," he introduced her to his assistant. "She has come to inspect our latest publications and examine our activities."

Kleinow rolled his eyes, and Dr Serach wondered whether he was looking at her as a woman or as a police councillor. Slightly from below and at an angle, she thought.

She let the impression pass without comment.

"You certainly," she said to Hartung, "have accumulated a fair number of entries in our files. But I have not come here today to intervene. The government has instructed us to conduct preliminary investigations. Not specifically into your publishing house and its publications, nor into your association, the *Gemeinschaft der Anderen*. Rather, we are preparing an advisory opinion for the legislature on how the protection of children and young people might in future be better regulated throughout the Reich, notwithstanding the continuing jurisdiction of the individual states.

"And that raises questions such as these: do your publications and activities contribute to the education of young people, or do they place their morals at risk? In other words—and this is the question that concerns us today—do such activities fall under §§175–184 of the Penal Code, particularly the provisions concerning criminal homosexual acts, public indecency and the distribution of obscene writings? Or can they be regarded as expressions of freedom of the press and freedom of opinion, and of artistic creation, under Article 118 of the Weimar Constitution?

"More than that: how would the law have to be changed so that your publications would not fall under any of these penal provisions where, according to present understanding, they manifestly pose no danger to young people?"

"Phew. That was quite a bundle of information. Give me a moment to think." Hartung paused. "Have I understood you correctly? This isn't about me, or about us here at the

publishing house, but about whether—and, if so, how—the laws themselves ought to be changed?”

Dr Serach nodded.

“That’s a relief,” Hartung said, glancing at his assistant. “Show Frau Polizeirätin Dr Serach our latest issues!”

Kleinow reached into a drawer of his desk, rummaged out two or three magazines and placed them before the police councillor, covers face down.

“Our latest issues,” he said, somewhat sheepishly. “They’re really intended for men,” he cautioned her.

“I’m not squeamish. This material is my daily bread,” Dr Serach assured him.

She pulled up a chair and sat down before the desk. Hartung remained standing beside her, looking over her shoulder as she turned over the first magazine and examined its cover.

Figure Study 5, it was captioned.

She had noticed at once that the naked young man looking out at her, standing with his arms raised as he held a brick aloft, the effort casting his pectoral muscles into relief, was none other than the young man sitting opposite her.

“An aesthetically pleasing figure,” the police councillor commented without looking up at him.

“An artistic study,” Hartung replied.

Kleinow remained silent.

Dr Serach turned the page and came to the first article, headed:

“On the Business of the Moral Executioners: Remarks on So-Called Protection from Trash.”

She read:

The so-called Law for the Protection of Young People from Trash, which arose from initiatives within the youth movement, had a limited purpose: to protect the young from genuinely trivial and inferior literature, in which there can be no question of artistic or intellectual substance, and to make room for serious writings of lasting value from the pens of recognised authors.

It was by no means intended to serve as an instrument of moral policing in the hands of ecclesiastical or political reaction, or to lend support to those dubious circles that operate in the shadows and have now begun to appropriate this law for themselves. In their hands it is being misused against enlightenment, intellectual freedom and social progress.

“The police need not agree with the position being put forward here, but it can hardly be denied that this is the expression of a clearly stated opinion. One might describe it as polemical in tone, but it seems to me indisputable that it constitutes a contribution to public debate.”

Hartung was eager to know whether the police councillor’s exonerating assessment would extend to his nude studies. But he did not dare draw her attention to them.

Dr Serach raised the subject herself.

“As for the photographs, I would place them in the category of art. The young man is indeed shown naked, including his genitals, but they are not depicted in a state of erection, and at most one might judge the musculature of his chest to be somewhat overemphasised. But who could possibly take offence at a man’s chest?”

Hartung’s expression brightened further.

“One thing I do find objectionable—not in the sense that it might be punishable, certainly not with regard to the proposed new legislation, but rather as a woman who has proved herself in public service, and speaking as such a woman—is your use of phrases such as ‘feeble, bloodless prettification and effeminate dishonesty in literature and art,’ followed by ‘deranged hysterical females’ and ‘disgusting rule by women.’ Does the strength of masculinity consist solely in the denigration of femininity?”

Dr Serach pointed to a passage in the magazine she was holding.

“Be glad that it is a woman with a doctorate in law who is conducting this preliminary investigation today. I know colleagues whose upbringing would lead them to judge rather less objectively. But, as I said, I am not here to put you on trial. Take my remarks as the well-meant advice of a woman for the future.”

Hartung was ordinarily nobody’s fool, but at that moment he had no idea what to say or how to say it. He cleared his throat, wondering whether it would be wiser to argue back or simply accept her judgement in silence.

Dr Serach forestalled him.

“You call for critical debate. I should like to see the same critical engagement applied to your own positions. But let me add something positive to my criticism. I noticed that you have spoken out in support of Theodor Lessing and against antisemitically coloured slanders. I give you considerable credit for that.”

Dr Serach did not wait for Hartung to formulate a reply to her objections.

“Send the next issue to me at the station—and I shall see whether, and how, you respond to my opinion.”

“You’re welcome to keep the latest issue and add it to your files.”

She slipped the magazine into her work bag and shook hands with Hartung and Kleinow.

“Keep within the law,” the police councillor said by way of farewell.

Hartung’s wife accompanied her through the house to the door.

A Conversation at the Institute of Sexology

After Dr Serach stepped out into the street, the visit to Hartung’s publishing house still reverberating in her mind, another note entered her thoughts.

C. W.—what would she make of such images, such texts, of this critical, indeed disparaging attitude towards women? Would she be able to talk to her about such things? Her few lines suggested an intellectually cultivated and responsible personality, an essential prerequisite for a stable relationship, Dr Serach thought.

Dr Serach sympathised with and admired people like Hartung for standing up for their own inclinations and those of others; what she disliked was merely the misogynistic manner in which he did so, which seemed only to reinforce the patriarchy she had had to live with throughout her studies and professional life without being able to fight against it. A pity, she

thought, that even men who considered themselves eccentric, singular and different fell into the very stereotypes against which they struggled.

The nude studies had aroused no feminine feelings in her, but did that mean she should consider the male body ugly or ungainly? How would C. W. have reacted to those magazines? Would she have regarded them as naked, pornographic, perhaps even found them attractive?

Was she homo-, hetero—

Dr Serach caught herself becoming unprofessional. Worse: allowing her profession and her private life to become entangled.

She took a seat on the train.

She would have liked to pull the magazine from her work bag, but, seeing the people sitting beside her and standing around her, decided to leave it there because of the explicit photographs and prepare for her next appointment from her notes instead.

C. W. nevertheless refused to leave her thoughts.

She stared at the information she had assembled on Dr Rosenhain.

Physician.

Naturopath.

Homosexual.

Science and humanity.

What did C. W. do for a living? Did she work at all? Married or solitary?

According to the files, Dr Rosenhain had two life partners: a younger man, Paul Linden, who assisted him in his practice, and another physician practising with him, Dr Akira Morimoto, who had studied at Kyoto Imperial University.

Morimoto had met Dr Rosenhain there when, during a guest lecture, he served as his interpreter in the ensuing discussion. After obtaining recognition as a specialist in Germany, Morimoto joined Dr Rosenhain's medical practice—though not solely out of professional interest, Dr Serach suspected.

Propaganda or reality?

The files said: "inflamed with love." Not the language of the police. A phrase smuggled in from the feuilleton and denunciation.

C. W. remained a cipher—and yet she drew Dr Serach towards her.

Dr Serach sighed. One sent two initials out into the world—and hoped the world would answer. The advertisement and everything that followed from it argued against all spontaneity—and yet she had placed it. Her profession taught her to plan ahead of the future; now she was submitting herself to that same order.

Acting against herself, against her own better judgement?

An emotional, irrational outburst?

She resisted the temptation to conform to male images of women and behave accordingly.

Then a first look at Dr Rosenhain's writings forced Dr Serach to engage with his theories. Rosenhain, she read, drew on Karl Heinrich Ulrichs: sexuality, like sex itself, was innate.

There was something persuasive in that for her. But Dr Serach resisted Ulrichs's proposition that homosexuals constituted a third sex because they were neither fully women nor fully men.

For as long as she could remember, she had felt herself to be a woman, a girl; yet from the beginnings of puberty she had found herself drawn to female friends not only emotionally but physically as well. And like Dr Rosenhain, who was critical of the term “homosexual” and preferred Ulrichs’s “Uranian,” Dr Serach did not think primarily in terms of sex or sexual acts, but of sympathies and antipathies.

She liked the term “Uranian” because it reminded her of Plato’s distinction between the heavenly, Uranian Aphrodite—love—and the pandemic, earthly love available to all.

She had never thought herself vulgar or ordinary. Yet she resisted just as strongly the idea that she was “peculiar” or “different.”

In the bars she often had to listen to “Different from the Others,” Selli Engler’s song, but she did not want to be different. Certainly not different from the others.

Simply to be.

That was what she wanted.

To be as and what she was—or as she felt herself to be.

Perhaps Dr Rosenhain, unlike Hartung, was right, and her orientation had less to do with upbringing and society. But why did no one subject the orientation of heterosexuals to the same critical scrutiny? Or, more pointedly still, those whose orientation was directed exclusively towards themselves—celibates, for instance?

Innate or acquired?

Or a mixture of both?

Why insist on one alternative as the norm?

Dr Rosenhain’s theories, as she had seen, had not gone unchallenged among scholars. It was conceded that the abundance of his clinical material, supplemented by Dr Hirschfeld’s, could not simply be refuted; sexual intermediate stages between male and female therefore had to be assumed. The question was how they were biologically anchored—from birth, fully developed or merely latent, or perhaps socially reinforced or concealed?

Psychologists of the Freudian school had regarded everything beyond the duality as a disorder originating in childhood, describing it as “deviant psychological behaviour.”

Worse still, in a Catholic textbook she encountered the phrase: “symptoms of psychopathic degeneration.”

She recoiled as she read it: at the sensation of being classified, but also at the author’s biography, which revealed that before taking up his university post he had spent several years as head of the department for “Psychosexual Disorders, Disorders of Potency and Instinct” at Dr Rosenhain’s institute.

Yet despite the author’s Catholic criticism of Dr Rosenhain, his conservative position and his development of Rosenhain’s theories, she came upon a later panegyric that struck her as almost programmatic:

“Ulrich von Hutten opposed intellectual servitude, Voltaire and Rousseau legal enslavement by authorities accepted uncritically through tradition. Like them, Dr Rosenhain understood his work as a contribution to liberation from bondage—in this case, the bondage of living drives and emotions to pseudoscientific tutelage.”

A struggle against bondage, she thought.

But how could the author then elevate bondage into genetics, turn it into a stamp and press it down onto an ink pad?

Pressing—

she had actually been thinking of beds, but the image carried her back to C. W.

She adjusted her blouse, positioned the pages squarely before her and forced herself to concentrate on them. Glancing down at the paper, she noticed that the open fabric gave her a view of the upper curve of her breasts.

Before turning the page, she pushed the top button through its little slit.

Because of the short notice she had been given for her assignment, she had managed to read only a few pages of Dr Rosenhain's extensive writings. She looked forward with curiosity to meeting him and Dr Morimoto, although she remained conscious of her duty to examine how far Dr Rosenhain's dissemination of his findings through numerous publications and public lectures complied with the law.

Dr Rosenhain had helped to establish a *Committee for Science and Humanity*, which campaigned politically for the abolition of §175. Hartung, she had discovered, had also been among the Committee's founders despite all his criticism of Dr Rosenhain's theories. To her, this demonstrated the importance of its social and political work across theoretical divisions—but also exposed a vulnerable flank in Rosenhain and his colleague.

Critics spoke of a "conflation of science, propaganda and private life."

An insight into the Committee's work and Dr Rosenhain's theories might provide ideas she could incorporate into her report, offering legislators proposals for the legal regulation of the protection of children and young people.

She began rearranging her notes, trying to concentrate on separating what was her own from what was required of her, surrendering herself to the demands of her office.

Against the rebellion she located not only beneath her skin but precisely in her reason.

The few biographical details she had assembled helped her focus on the appointment ahead. Dr Rosenhain had evidently accumulated a considerable fortune from his fees as a physician, expert witness and author, perhaps also with the assistance of unnamed supporters. According to the files, in 1919 he had succeeded in establishing an *Institute of Sexology*, housed in a grand bourgeois villa dating from the late nineteenth century in Berlin's Tiergarten district. It contained not only his medical practice. In the two-storey house he had also established an archive and library, as well as lecture and consultation rooms. In the immediate vicinity he had acquired an apartment building as well—for, according to the land register, the staggering sum of 625,000 gold marks.

On the books, it was worth a third more than the villa.

Dr Serach rang the bell.

Before the door opened, she looked up at the tall façade and sensed behind it the networks of support it concealed: liberals, Social Democrats, reformers and international scholars—but also their enemies among nationalists, conservative jurists and an increasingly powerful *völkisch* press.

Standing before the house, the complications of her assignment became clearer still.

Dr Rosenhain was not merely a physician and internationally known scholar, but a political figure upon whom hopes and fears alike were projected.

Larger than life.

And everything she had read by and about him suggested that he was perfectly conscious of his position. Not least because he lectured publicly—and right-wing groups regularly attempted to disrupt those lectures with whistles and jeering.

A rabble he confronted with superior silence and an almost imperceptible gesture.

Things had been worse for him than in Berlin or Hamburg, where he was often regarded as a celebrated, if fiercely contested, intellectual and appeared to applause. In Nuremberg and Stettin his lectures had repeatedly had to be cancelled after threatening letters; in Munich, Dr Serach read in the police files, Rosenhain had even been the victim of an assassination attempt in 1920.

Hardly because of his homosexuality, if she understood the documents correctly. That had not yet figured in any of the accusations or slogans directed against him.

Rather because of his campaign against §175.

Because of his Social Democratic position.

And ultimately because he was Jewish.

The lecture in Munich's Tonhalle that preceded the attack was described by some as compelling and readily comprehensible; others found him dry, almost schoolmasterly. In it he had touched upon the subject of the sexual transformation of men and the question whether they might be cured of homosexuality, provoking heated reactions.

Dr Rosenhain rejected the idea that homosexuality was an illness and consequently saw no reason to seek a cure, although he remained open to helping men who experienced their homosexuality as a source of suffering.

Dr Rosenhain's hereditary-biological conception of same-sex orientation brought Dr Serach a certain relief, even a little comfort.

But she feared for her freedom.

If my inclinations and orientations are determined from birth, she wondered as she read, what becomes of will and desire, what becomes of surprise—and who decides when a predisposition becomes an explanation and when it becomes a fate?

Why did women play a comparatively minor role in Dr Rosenhain's work? She had already noticed the same thing with Hartung.

Into these questions wove her image of C. W.

She did not read the few lines exchanged with C. W. as the expression of some predetermined constellation. No, what had passed between them was surely not the result of an innate determination, but spoke simply of desire—of one woman feeling drawn to another.

She read self-assurance in them too.

Perhaps they offered the beginning of a possible relationship.

Dr Serach admitted to herself that without planning there would be no unplannable love either. Structure was the foundation of her everyday life, the structure into which she forced herself.

For the other part of her life, however, she longed to be released from it. For another framework. One she would not have to erect and hold in place herself. Hence her desire to exchange her own dominance for that of a partner.

At this point I stopped. Why could Dr Serach not dream of an equal partnership? If same-sex, why not equal as well? Why remain caught in hierarchies and dominance? She resisted Dr Rosenhain's classifications—and slipped into classifications of her own.

I looked at the mass of documents and information before me. I understood Dr Serach's desire for a suitable partner, yet found it equally difficult to understand why a woman in her position would expose herself to such danger.

She was responsible in Berlin for those threatened by §175 and for the meeting places they chose and she was charged with regulating: the pubs and bars—150 of them, three times as many as in Hamburg and many times more than in any other city in the Reich—the theatres, lavatories, lodging houses, street corners, and the press, publishing houses and kiosks associated with them.

And all this beneath the scrutiny of parliament and the watchful eyes of politicians and of the police officers under her command in the department responsible for the protection of children and young people.

How could she, of all people, go looking for a female life partner?

Life, I knew from my own experience as a young lecturer in art history who had spent many years in a relationship with a Catholic priest while at the same time finding myself drawn to a younger fashion designer, is often complicated.

Perhaps contradictory.

Even after many years, my world had never become whole. I had separated from the priest after being confronted with experiences of abuse he had concealed from me. At almost the same time my partner died, and suddenly I was alone.

A woman in a man's world.

A human being who, like Tamar, refused to be classified as half-man, half-woman.

Nor did I want to have to *stand my man*.

At first the aim was simply to survive the losses, and often, as I approached the finishing line, I felt like an untrained marathon runner whose legs and feet can no longer be moved even by desire itself.

Whether people applauded or criticised from either side passed me by.

Bruno was over.

Feeny had been taken from me, although she was the only person I could see before me: a whole woman mourning another whole woman.

And then one of Feeny's former friends, Valery, had reappeared in my life—at Feeny's funeral in Munich, of all places. From a conservative English family.

Yet I tried to imagine how much more difficult Tamar's world must have been in the Berlin of the 1920s.

Then another thought occurred to me.

If Dr Tamar Serach had managed to reconcile her personal and professional lives, why should I not manage the same in my university career?

How difficult that could be in academic life I knew from the autobiography of Dr Serach's cousin, the university historian who had not come out as homosexual until he was over eighty.

The broad door before Dr Serach opened. The first thing she saw was the white gloves of the house attendant as she moved the heavy door, with its barred window set into the centre. In her white cap, the woman looked like a nurse. She quickly withdrew into the darkness and made way for a gentleman in a white coat.

“Frau Polizeirätin Dr Serach?”

Dr Serach nodded.

“Please come in. We have been expecting you.”

The courteous man, bowing slightly in the Asian manner familiar to her, added an inviting gesture. The corridor ran alongside a reception hall where people of various ages, mostly men, sat at small tables engrossed in newspapers, pamphlets, magazines and books. Many had cups before them; teapots stood on warmers with candles burning beneath. Quite a few were smoking, some cigarillos, others heavy cigars.

The Institute was no mere medical practice, as Dr Serach had imagined. She had the impression of having wandered into a Viennese café.

Slightly disconcerted, she glanced at her Japanese companion as he led her past the tables into another room. A massive globe dominated one corner. Europe, the German Reich and Berlin were hidden on the far side.

The Americas confronted her.

“Dr Rosenhain has travelled widely?” Dr Serach began.

“Indeed—that is how we met,” Dr Morimoto replied. “Though Dr Rosenhain lectured not only in the United States, but quite often on the other side of the globe as well.”

He stepped towards the globe, turned the world on its axis and pointed to a small island.

“We first met here, in Japan. More precisely, in Kyoto, which on this globe is marked by no more than a tiny dot.”

“Still, Berlin can hardly be any larger.”

“True. But here in Europe,” he said, “great politics is made.”

Dr Serach heard—or wanted to hear: not only great politics. What mattered were advances in medicine, neurology and psychotherapy.

And in policing too.

“And this is where sexology was founded. That is what Dr Rosenhain called the field he created, is it not?”

“Oh, you have been doing your reading.”

“Making myself informed, rather. As my assignment requires.”

“I understand. Let me see whether Dr Rosenhain is free to receive you.”

She marvelled at his almost flawless German, perhaps with the faintest trace of Berlin in it.

Dr Morimoto knocked at the door nearest the globe. He opened it carefully and half stepped inside. He spoke briefly with a colleague who came towards him and whom Dr Serach recognised from photographs among the files on her desk as Dr Rosenhain’s other assistant, Paul Linden.

“We shall have to be patient a little longer. Dr Rosenhain is still with a patient. He should not be long.”

Dr Serach’s first impression was confirmed.

Here she was waiting for a man accustomed to others arranging themselves around him. And in this magnificently staged environment he possessed such learned forces to shield him.

Dependable, palpable, friendly. But provocative too.

What, after all, were a small government department, a city and a state government when matters of world importance were at stake?

Suddenly the door Dr Morimoto had gently closed opened again. Dr Rosenhain appeared on the threshold in all his bulk, broad-backed, with a pronounced moustache and low-set spectacles.

This was the entrance of a master of the house, a director, a physician of substance. No Jewish caricature. No effeminate homosexual of the kind she had encountered in recent newspaper reports and in police surveillance reports from Hamburg and Munich—less often Berlin—when she first began looking into this man.

The figure standing before her was formidable, and he addressed her in a firm bass voice.

“Rosenhain. A very warm welcome, Frau Polizeirätin Serach.”

He extended his hand and invited her through the anteroom into his study.

Before she could explain her assignment, Dr Rosenhain, having asked her to sit opposite him at a small table and drawn out her chair, continued:

“You belong to the police authority most important to our Institute. It is thanks to you and your colleagues that the parliament here in Berlin is taking a pioneering role in redefining the relations between the formations of the sexes—and on a worldwide scale. A light not to be hidden under a bushel, as one would say in this country. And led by a woman like yourself: sober, clear-sighted. A scholar with a doctorate. Your type shows that you preside over a matter of which you possess profound knowledge.”

Your type? echoed inside her.

As though she were a specimen.

“You flatter me too much, Dr Rosenhain. I am an ordinary police officer.”

What does he know, she thought, *that I have never told him and that he cannot possibly know?*

“A councillor—a woman in a position occupied by very few others in Prussia.”

Should she allow him to draw her into his conversation? Had she not come to inspect him and his Institute, to determine what preventive measures she might need to recommend, in light of Dr Rosenhain’s publications, for inclusion in the revised legislation?

“You will have received our notification that, in preparation for the new legislation, we are examining ways of improving the protection of children and young people. Your Institute will also be affected.”

“My dear Councillor, what do we mean by protection? How far does childhood extend, and where does youth begin and end? In past centuries, protection has been understood as supervision, the threat of punishment and the execution of punishment. Perhaps what has been overlooked is that protection itself has often been neglected. For are we not speaking of education, of bringing people to awareness—or, as we practise it here at the Institute, a combination of both?”

Dr Serach resisted the criticism inwardly, irritated at finding herself placed on the side of a world turned upside down. And yet she was fascinated by the thought of not merely forcing sexuality into the categories of penal statutes, but of looking at the human beings behind them.

“As a woman, you will presumably notice this more clearly even within the police than some of your colleagues.”

She was about to concede Dr Rosenhain’s point. After all, she did regard herself as something of an exception within her department, charged specifically with bringing her particular perspective to bear upon the world, and especially upon women and men, so that the police duty of protection might be carried out more adequately—and now, in this investigation, perhaps even influence the new legislation for the better.

Yet the exceptional position Dr Rosenhain was assigning her sounded as though he had taken the words directly from her mouth before she had even spoken them.

Was this not another version of the male condescension she experienced in meetings at Police Headquarters with the President and the executive board?

“I hope so,” Dr Serach said. “Which is precisely why I should like to examine your Institute’s present educational and advisory programme with you and determine where there may be borderline cases, perhaps even instances where boundaries are crossed—for example, in illustrated publications and in counselling minors, particularly girls. Indeed, your Institute appears to be directed rather more towards the male sex.”

“What is ‘the male sex’?”

“You are asking a woman who experiences every day what happens when human beings are reduced to formulas of nature.”

“Anyone familiar with my studies will know how nuanced my understanding of nature is. There is no single ‘nature,’ any more than there is a simple duality between ‘male’ and ‘female.’”

“But surely you are not going to deny me the right to call myself a ‘woman,’ any more than you would refuse to call yourself a ‘man’?”

“Clearly you have already engaged seriously with our subject. Without wishing to deny the differences between us, I would say that we do not stand at opposite poles, but within a social context in which there are degrees of proximity and distance.”

“You mean: within a social and biological context.”

He smiled.

“Chapeau—you know the field even better than I had assumed. Yes, within a biological field of tension, too, which of course cannot be considered apart from sociopolitical conditions. Even though I am always happy to argue with people like Wilhelm Hartung, both here at the Institute and in the Committee, about how far one sphere of influence extends and where another begins.”

Dr Rosenhain rose and went to the door.

“Herr Linden, would you please gather the latest pamphlets for Frau Polizeirätin, together with the announcements of our lectures, and prepare them for her to take away?”

“Thank you for your cooperation,” Dr Serach said. “I suggest we arrange another appointment once I have reviewed the material in my department and any further questions have arisen.”

“With pleasure. And you would also be very welcome at one of our events. Indeed, how would you feel about giving a lecture here at the Institute: *The View of the Berlin Police on the Extension of §175 to Lesbian Women—for or against the ‘Austrian model’?* We have a delegation from Vienna visiting next quarter, and we should be extremely interested in a discussion of the subject, whatever direction the new Prussian and Reich legislation may ultimately take.”

Even on the tram Dr Serach had to admit to herself that Dr Rosenhain impressed her intellectually, not least with his invitation to contribute from the perspective of both the police and a woman.

At the Institute she had neither accepted nor declined.

In any case, the decision was not hers alone. She would need the approval of her superior before making such a public appearance. But should she not try to obtain it? The idea appealed to her—to strike a breach against the oppressive Austrian policy and in favour of the progress embodied by Prussia.

So far.

How necessary a decisive argument against extending §175 had become was already apparent to Dr Serach from the preparations being made on the legal right. She had in her hands the NSDAP’s Twenty-Five Point Programme, proclaimed at Munich’s Hofbräuhaus in 1920. It contained the slogan: *The common good before self-interest!*

Attached to Dr Rosenhain’s file was an NSDAP pamphlet that echoed it:

What matters is not whether you or I survive. What matters is only the continued propagation of the German people. And it can survive only if those who beget are prepared to fight—for life means struggle. Struggle, however, requires discipline. Anyone who wastes his thoughts on love between men or love between women places himself outside the national community. Nature itself reveals another law: the stronger prevails. That too requires discipline—not those forms of man-with-man relations that contradict the order of the people.

At least it spoke not only of men—even if men were condemned to beget and women to become incubators.

The struggle for procreation was justified by the “divine idea of creation,” which, according to the pamphlet, was thwarted only by “the malicious impulses of the Jewish soul, through its physical relations with animals, siblings and persons of the same sex.” These were to be regarded as “common Syrian aberrations, crimes of the gravest kind, punishable by hanging or expulsion.”

However repelled Dr Serach was by the crude antisemitic abuse, what mattered more to her was the language of struggle, propagation and disciplined commitment to the German people.

With discipline and being German she could identify.

In her family it was simply understood—and she experienced little different among the families of friends—that she was German. It was hardly even a subject one discussed. What else was the family supposed to be? I later read in an account of the family’s life by her historian cousin.

The family had produced some of Berlin's most important publishers, was closely connected with influential banking houses and galleries, supported museums and financed important political causes. In those circles, people who emigrated in the 1920s and even as late as 1934 were regarded as eccentrics afflicted by an "urge towards self-destruction," willing to accept the draining of vital blood from the Reich.

Even the word "Zionism," he wrote, had seemed foreign at the time.

And later too, even after the cousin had emigrated, gone into exile and built a successful career as a historian in the United States, he remained aware of how pronounced the family's lack of interest in Israel had been.

Dr Serach later put it bluntly when he told her he intended to spend a longer period in Jerusalem after accepting a post there: "I cannot imagine how you can bear living among nothing but Jews."

He had replied:

"Believe it or not, they don't all look Jewish. More like people on the Ku'damm."

Her family was not remotely Nazi. But it was nationalist through and through. German "honour" had to be restored. Order and discipline. Together with self-assertion, as her father had taught by example.

It therefore did not surprise me that I also saw in Dr Serach how slowly she became conscious of her own Jewishness—and only after the National Socialists had long since branded her as Jewish.

Women's Friendship

After her exploratory visits to the two male publishers, Dr Serach was curious about her meeting with Sylvia Enner, who appeared to oversee both the editing and publication of *Women's Friendship*.

At the same time, she hesitated.

Why?

I had compared the trade register, and the discrepancy between the commercial entry and the imprint must also have caught Dr Serach's attention.

The details printed in the first issue of the magazine, founded only in 1925, did not appear in the police trade register. The journal itself gave: *Publisher of Women's Friendship*; editor Sylvia Enner; address: Elisabethstraße 19, Berlin NO 18.

Yet no publishing business under that name was officially registered at the address. Instead, the Eichenhain Verlag appeared there. That firm, however, seemed to specialise in textbooks on telecommunications and telegraphy as well as dictionaries, studies and illustrated works on German language and culture.

That such a publisher would also produce magazines for women struck me as more than doubtful.

I was therefore not surprised when, in Dr Serach's notes, I came across her account of the meeting:

"How is it," Dr Serach asked her host, trying to arrange herself on the soft sofa without appearing too informal before Frau Enner, "that your publishing house has no doorbell or

nameplate of its own? I was admitted through the entrance of the Eichenhain Verlag, and only here in the rear building do the name and office of your *Publisher of Women's Friendship* appear."

"We live, as you of all people will know, in times of disguise. The director of the Eichenhain Verlag, himself a member of the *The Society of the Others* and active in it, came across me through my publications in women's magazines such as *The Bazaar*. Perhaps also because I had already founded a periodical, the *Journal for Women's Friendship*, and tried to publish it, though for health and financial reasons I could not sustain it for long. Dr Albrecht von Eichenberg, the owner, offered me the opportunity to develop a new publishing venture devoted to this field, with his backing."

"An independent publishing house?"

"You have probably already guessed the other reason why the name appears only here on the bell. The *Publisher of Women's Friendship* is not independent, no. Ninety per cent belongs to the Eichenhain Verlag; the remaining shares are mine, as a silent partner."

"That makes the corporate structure rather clearer."

"With you, of course, there is no difficulty in saying so. But from the experience of colleagues such as Wilhelm Hartung, and from what we have seen in this building ourselves, it would be extremely unwise if a publisher issuing a women's magazine of this kind were visible from the street."

"You are required to print the address in the issues, and you do."

"As you know, we have no choice. But if people hostile to us come looking for the premises, they do not find us immediately. We admit visitors only by prior arrangement—as we have you today."

"No criticism intended. Quite the opposite. I can understand that, and from the point of view of avoiding public disturbance alone, such caution is to be encouraged."

The atmosphere between the two women relaxed.

Frau Enner served coffee. Tamar had agreed to one.

No sugar.

During a brief exchange about how they spent their free time, they even began to warm to one another. Then, steering the conversation back towards official business, Dr Serach continued, cup in her left hand:

"You state a circulation of ten thousand copies. Is that not rather optimistic commercially?"

"Not at all. We generally print and sell the entire run. Many copies by subscription, quite a number through kiosks."

"Which is now almost possible only in Berlin."

"Thanks to you here in Berlin. Distribution through kiosks in Munich, Frankfurt, Hamburg and elsewhere is considerably more difficult, though not impossible."

"Colleague Jäger in Hamburg is surely no less well disposed towards you than we are here in Berlin."

"That is true, but from the conversations we have had with him and his department, he appears to be under considerably greater pressure from the city government than you seem to be here."

“Those are internal matters. But I am glad we have somewhat greater room to manoeuvre, perhaps also because the Reich government is based here in the city and is currently led by the SPD. I should not conceal, however, that even here there is continual debate over whether a magazine such as yours belongs among ‘trash and obscene literature.’ And the Reich government is working on revising the legal framework.”

“What would you recommend we do to prepare for the new regulations?”

“I am not here to advise you.”

“Even though the police are supposed to be ‘friend and helper,’ as the international police exhibition of that very name here in Berlin proclaimed so grandly only a few days ago?”

“That is advertising language. The fact is that I am required to ensure your products remain within the law. And that raises the question whether almost every issue really needs to show a completely unclothed woman on the cover, sometimes several, not infrequently with the pubic area visible.”

“You are confusing *Women’s Friendship* with our other magazine, *Paula*.”

“Which you publish as well.”

“We do, but it is intended for a different readership. And it is not sold openly over the counter.”

“In that case, send me reference copies of both magazines.”

“Gladly. And you will no doubt approve of the fact that we are anything but left-wing.”

“Nor right-wing?”

“No, certainly not extremist. In one of the serial narratives running through several issues, an author from Königsberg writes about female heroines—for example a woman who, disguised as a tailor, joined the reserve battalion of the Colberg Regiment and fought on several fronts during the war. She was wounded too, and received an annual pension from the Kaiser. “In another episode, a lady from Lüneburg writes of genuine German feeling and devotion to the fatherland, coupled with a burning hatred of the French. With great patriotic enthusiasm she likewise rendered important service during the war to the liberation of the fatherland.”

“It is commendable that your magazine concerns itself not only with relationships but also with the great political questions of our time.”

“One of those important questions is precisely how people who love their own sex can live within society. In the latest issue, for example, one of our authors sets out her views on how society ought to develop if women are to be allowed self-determination.”

Frau Enner placed an issue on the table in front of Dr Serach, opened it and read aloud:

“Unfortunately, the world as it is today forces all of us to wear a false appearance before others. Why can we not openly show our disposition? It is not our fault that we are different from the others; it is merely nature’s doing. Let us be what we are, and we shall move mountains.”

“Do you think that view is correct—that women who love women are different from the others, and that this entails some kind of guilt, even if the guilt is attributed not to the individual but to nature?”

“Publishing articles for which individual authors take responsibility does not mean that the editors or the publishing house necessarily share their views.”

“I asked what *you* think.”

“We are different from the others, I think.”

“I doubt that—from my own experience,” she said, then quickly added, “from my experience in police service.”

Sylvia Enner had faltered at the first half of the sentence.

She was still holding her breath.

Had she heard something in that answer that the policewoman sitting before her would rather have kept concealed, something she had not even intended to let slip?

Frau Enner herself now seemed uneasy and steered the conversation elsewhere. She pointed to the two magazines lying before them.

“Look.” Frau Enner opened the first inside page of each. “We produce the same content, but put it into two different outward forms. One without a cover photograph, or at most with an unobjectionable cover image, for *Women’s Friendship*; the other with an artistic, explicit photograph for *Paula*.”

“Separate marketing, so that you can circumvent censorship?”

“Not really. Rather, so that the same magazine content can reach different women by different routes.”

Dr Serach studied the two versions.

“Which one has the larger circulation?”

“You may guess,” the publisher interrupted, looking directly at Dr Serach.

“The one with the naked breasts?”

“No—the explicit version is available only by subscription. The other sells on the street, and because we can sell it at kiosks even in the more prudish cities of the Reich, it has the larger circulation.”

Dr Serach seemed reassured and satisfied by the answer and thanked the publisher for the openness with which she had spoken to her. She had noticed that Frau Enner had not increased the distance between them as she showed her the two magazines side by side. Nor did her companion seem uncomfortable with the exchange.

That, however, made Dr Serach slightly uneasy.

For the first time during their conversation.

“May I invite you? This coming Saturday we are holding a ball, an evening in honour of the director of the Eichenhain Verlag. The ladies of the *The Society of the Others* wish to pay tribute to him and thank him for taking the initiative in launching these magazines. The idea is for women themselves to contribute actively—artistically, with poetry, short pieces, pictures or dance performances. Anyone with a good voice who would like to sing is warmly invited as well. If you came, perhaps you might say a few words about the importance of our publishing house and its magazines, and about the legal boundaries within which we have to operate.”

Dr Serach gave her a wink to indicate that she was not disinclined, but made clear that she would have to obtain official permission. She would let her know at once.

When she had crossed the rear courtyard and stepped back into the street, she drew a deep breath.

The conversation had unsettled her.

Not in what had been said, but in what she had felt.

Was it the manner of the woman opposite her, the directness with which the publisher had answered her questions and, now and then, allowed the conversation to become personal?

Her intellectual sharpness? Her interest in the questions confronting women in this world that was becoming increasingly male?

She had the sense of having met a woman who, in her own way, was fighting for the same cause, even if she lived on the other side of the street from Dr Serach herself—a side she was also charged with watching over.

But perhaps one did not have to watch over everything in order to protect it.