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Chapter 4

The S 7 juddered, stuttered, jerked, then suddenly sped off as if it had been held in a firm grip from behind and had just freed itself with the last of its strength. The glass cube of Friedrichstrasse station remained behind, rain slapping against the scratched panes. The train hissed across its iron viaduct towards Alexanderplatz, constantly level with the city's third storeys. Soot-blackened tenement facades passed by, grubby stucco, crumbling brick walls, heavy curtains behind friable old window frames, stone guttering patched up with plastic and wire and long since just as leaky as before. Between the tenement buildings were lit-up multi-storey printers' type cases, made up of countless square segments in which the authorities collected Robotron populations, rubber plants and office staff.

Wegener felt cold.

The heating wasn't working or wasn't switched on yet; perhaps the penny-pinchers at the public transport authority had been hoping for a mild October. The rain turned into light hail, click-clacking on the metal roof, stones of ice crawling diagonally across the window panes leaving thin trails of water behind them. The train leaned into a curve to turn right, a glowing comet's tail in the dark vale of buildings. Above the roofs, the silver ball of the television tower appeared in the evening sky like a gigantic Christmas bauble. Lights played on the wet asphalt of Karl-Liebnecht-Strasse, breaking in the wandering raindrops on the carriage windows. Wegener suddenly had the feeling he could smell lebkuchen or mulled wine with cinnamon. Christmas grabbed hold of him with the vehemence of memories abruptly triggered, by a scent, a taste, by something you had not the slightest inkling of only a second before. The train braked as abruptly as it had moved off. A piercing screech under the sheet-metal flooring. Standstill. The doors hissed for longer than they took to open. Wegener got off the train, took the stairs to the ground floor and tried to get the Christmas associations out of his mind, all the remnants of the mother-and-father world he kept successfully pushing away, which kept coming successfully back again, the grievous loss that slithered along behind him on the downhill paths of memory and would crash into the back of his head on Christmas Eve at the latest. When he

pushed open the station's huge swinging doors, Alexanderplatz smelled of Phobos fat, thank goodness, rather than of chestnuts roasting on an open fire. A month and a half from now, mulled wine, stodgy stollen cake, candyfloss and dreary celebrations would get the upper hand.

The employees in the Berolina-Haus were still building socialism at quarter past seven in the evening; lights were on in almost all the windows. Wegener flipped up his collar and ran alongside the raised train tracks towards the glowing sandstone hulk, trying to ignore the intensifying scent of bratwurst, dodging several puddles the size of dining tables on Dircksenstrasse and cursing: fifty-six years old and you still don't have an umbrella!

By the time he reached the glass canopy of the Berolina-Haus he was wet through. Next to the massive golden gateway of the main entrance shone the showy brass plaque with its endless engraving: Ministry of Energy Export and Transit Industry of the German Democratic Republic. Departments i – iv, vii – Sub-Departments a – h.

Beneath that the state insignia.

Wegener walked up to the guard formation and handed over his ID chip-card. The card was inserted into a Borska mobile scanner dangling from a sergeant's belt. The scanner buzzed, two red lights went out, two green lights flashed. An obese chump of a guard shone a hand-held xenon lamp in Wegener's face, compared the chip-card face with the one in front of him, and looked satisfied enough. 'Welcome to the Ministry of Energy Export and Transit Industry, Captain.'

'And I thought you'd be giving me a nice firm feel between my legs.'

'A sensory check isn't necessary for officers in the People's Police service after positive inspection of the service ID document and visual identification, sir.'

Wegener checked the remains of his hairdo in the reflective metal of the ministry's brass plaque and entered the reception hall. Warmth, vanilla air freshener, Rachmaninoff. Piano concerto no. 3. He'd been here twice with Karolina, a couple of years ago when she'd applied for the post of assistant to some section head, been rejected, invited to another interview and rejected again. The transit business is getting so important they're bound to call me again sometime, Karolina had claimed after the second rejection, and had done nothing but wait. Six months later she had the

job. Our victim fits in perfectly here, thought Wegener. This is where that suit, that watch, that tie belong. He strode across to the elegant nutwood counter and placed his police ID card on the polished surface. 'I'd like to see Ms Karolina Enders please.'

The receptionist raised two imaginary eyebrows and tapped at her Nanotchev keyboard with a deliberate lack of haste. Patterned fingernails: sun, moon and stars. Wegener put his ID away again, leant against the counter and felt like he was on the other side of the Wall. Arrival at the Grand Hotel. The hall of the Berolina-Haus was nothing less than an orgy. An orgy of brass and marble. A brash boast of a room for the energy-crazed EU sub-negotiators – look at what the GDR has to offer, and you're all gagging for it. Peace to the cottages, bring on the palaces. Ceiling lamps, wall lights, standing ashtrays, the signs for the individual departments – everything that could possibly be made of metal was shiny and golden. The floor was pale stone. Swathes of red carpet marked out paths across the spotless white, crossing in the middle of the hall, flowing up curved flights of stairs on either side to the first floor. A giant flatscreen covered in diagrams, stock market curves, flashing numbers. Energy prices from London to Peking. Seated on a suite of dark leather cubes, two young men in suits laughed, one showing the other something on his Minsk. Short-cropped hair. Pale, flattened faces. Russian gas boys, thought Wegener, and heard the receptionist telling Karolina over the phone that a Mr Wagner was here. Or something.

A tall white-haired man greeted the young Russians. The man couldn't bear to let go of his guests' hands. The smaller Russian said something that made all three of them grin. 'Lafontaine!' the white-haired man called out. Now they were laughing out loud. The smaller Russian attempted to pat the tall white-haired man on the shoulder but couldn't reach quite that high. The receptionist gave a polite cough. Wegener turned around. 'Ms Enders will be down in a minute. Please take a seat.'

Wegener nodded, turned on his heel and went over to the seats. The white-haired man and his Russians passed him, all three smelling of tobacco, aftershave and avarice. '*Wir sind da sehr optimistisch,*' said the white-haired man, '*und Herr Jost natürlich auch.*' One of the Russians answered in German, something Wegener didn't understand. *Herr Jost* was mentioned, and a word that sounded something like *enda*. Perhaps he meant Enders. Wegener sat down on the leather couch and tried to imagine Karolina sitting around at conferences with these Russian milksops, wearing

an expensive suit and a genuine-looking artificial smile, a thousand snippets of information and target figures in her head, just turned thirty-five, still in the body of a twenty-year-old and the first half of the ministry career ladder already climbed, her eyes set firmly on the second half. A few years ago she'd have found the idea bizarre. A few years ago she'd have said, making money's fine, but leave me out of the international state business stuff. International state business wasn't only about money; it was about power too. And everything to do with power ends up costing you your neck at some point, in this country. If you value your neck you should keep out of it – for life.

'I'm innocent, Mr Police Officer!' Karolina had emerged from one of the lifts and was making no attempt to conceal her surprise. A surprised face had never looked prettier. No face had ever looked prettier.

'I remember differently,' said Wegener, instantly regretting it. Every word he uttered now would have an unbearable hint of the past about it, every sentence would point backwards, becoming a figment of back then, a rip in time gone out of control. Wegener wondered what was worse – that he couldn't stop himself or that Karolina didn't even notice. She radiated confidence. She kissed him on the cheek, as distanced as if he was a child with an infectious disease. Sat down on the sofa, leaving two spaces between them.

'Good choice of music for a foyer,' said Wegener.

'Thanks. I'll let them know.' Karolina took her Minsk out of her skirt pocket and pressed two buttons in rapid succession. Mute.

'New telephone?'

'M 7.'

'Oh, you're with the Stasi now, are you?'

Karolina's freckled face was instantly slightly offended. Her narrow mouth a line that didn't know where to go. Her eyebrows a double portion of childish affront. Her rust-red hair even shorter than last time. A flat hat of a hairstyle that still looked good, like everything about Karolina. Women wear their hair short because they know men want women to wear their hair long, thought Wegener and said, 'The assistant to a section head at the Ministry of Energy Export and Transit Industry of the German Democratic Republic could do with a bit more sense of humour. Humour's good for

business.'

The contours of Karolina's mouth softened. 'I meant to tell you over a mulled wine. How was I to know you'd just turn up here out of the blue?'

A few seconds' silence.

'You look so happy. Are you pregnant or have you been fired?'

Karolina laughed. 'Promoted.'

Wegener didn't know how to react, and he saw that Karolina noticed that he didn't know how to react.

'So what do I call you now?'

'Section head in the Ministry of Energy Export and Transit Industry of the German Democratic Republic. Or gas whore. Whichever you prefer.'

'I'll take the gas whore.'

'Good choice.'

'Which section?'

'Central Europe. Section 1.'

'Sounds good.' Wegener attempted a charming smile, sensing it was a failure. 'Fancy a currywurst?'

'I'd love one. But all hell's loose here, what with the consultations coming up.' Karolina pulled a long-suffering face and raised her hands. No new ring.

'Ah yes, the consultations,' said Wegener. 'Maybe I can spare your place here a bit of trouble. With regard to those consultations.'

All signs of childishness vanished from Karolina's face. 'What kind of trouble?'

Wegener looked around. The moon-faced receptionist was on the telephone. The white-haired man and his Russian lads had disappeared.

'Is this place bugged?'

'I hope not. Why?'

'The answer will cost you a currywurst, combine career woman.'

Karolina reached into her skirt pocket and pulled out a crumpled ten-mark note. 'All right, we're both fast eaters.'

Karolina added salt. Her double portion of currywurst was steaming on its cardboard tray. She'd already bombarded it with black pepper and Pikanta curry spice mix, and now she shook the salt-cellar with a hand gesture that made Wegener feel wistful. He pulled the standing-level table further under the awning, from which the rain was flowing down on all sides, slightly closer to the heating soldier. Karolina followed the table, the salt-cellar still in motion. Jan 'The Smooch' Hermann was singing about time and love again from a tinny loudspeaker.

Wegener smiled. 'Have you seen a doctor about that?'

'Because I don't like tasteless food?'

'Because you use up the spice contingent of an average socialist household. That's four people.'

'I work enough for four people, too.' Karolina skewered several slices of sausage on her wooden fork and they disappeared into her mouth.

'It got you a promotion though.'

Karolina chewed and swallowed. 'That and the fact that we started up new sections. The West's getting greedier by the day. And we have to deliver more by the day.'

'And you earn more by the day.'

'That's the way it is when one state has something and the other ones don't.'

'Except we haven't really got anything either.' Wegener drank a glug of his beer. 'The gas belongs to the Russians.'

'The Russians have the gas, and we have the land it has to be transported across. And the West wants conservative energy. Just sun and wind aren't quite enough in the long run.'

'How long have we got?'

Karolina shrugged and skewered her next load of sausage. 'Twenty or thirty years. Maybe fifty. Nobody ever said the transit fees would finance us until communist nirvana. But you know what it would be like here without them. Dark as a dungeon.'

Wegener bit a chunk off his bratwurst and rinsed it down with beer. 'And Mr Chancellor is your superman-next-door.'

Karolina smiled. 'Lafontaine's good for sales.'

‘Because he makes sure you get new delivery contracts.’

‘Because our Western brothers and sisters voted for a chancellor last year who doesn’t consider the socialist idea a crime against humanity per se. Krenz is delighted. Great rapprochement between the German brother states. The whole idea of the consultations is down to Lafontaine. With a double benefit: lower gas prices over there, higher transit fees over here.’

‘I’m almost delighted as Krenz.’

‘Martin, did you come just to discuss inter-German relations?’

‘Maybe. How are they going then?’

‘Difficult. Still.’

Wegener rested his elbows on the table and looked Karolina in the eye. ‘I’ve got a murder case on my desk. Since yesterday evening. But presumably not for much longer.’

Karolina chewed, gave a questioning look, and resumed chewing.

‘Presumably K5 will take over tonight. Or someone else.’

‘Why?’

‘Let’s not go into that.’

‘What kind of a murder is it?’

‘My victim’s called Emil Fischer. Or at least that’s what he called himself.’

Karolina drank a swig of Wegener’s beer. ‘And what’s it got to do with the ministry?’

‘The man was hanged from one of your pipelines.’

Karolina put the bottle down, her wooden fork sinking.

‘It was all very quick,’ said Wegener. ‘He didn’t suffer.’

‘How reassuring. Which pipeline was it?’

‘Mainline North.’

Karolina released an audible breath and drank another large swig of beer. ‘Does the ministry know about it?’

‘Of course; we can’t conduct investigations in the restricted zone without informing you lot. They sent a team out to the crime scene, but they couldn’t help us either.’

‘And now you’re wondering...?’

‘I can’t help wondering whether the case has something to do with your lot. With the consultations.’

‘Shit.’ Karolina took a pack of Duett out of her coat pocket. ‘Do they bug currywurst stalls?’

Wegener bit into his sausage and chewed. ‘Don’t worry, only the good ones get bugged.’

‘Why are you telling me all this?’

‘Because I’ll be signing a form any day now that says I’m not allowed to say or ask anything about this matter for the rest of my life, unless I want to lose my badly paid job.’

‘Since when has it made you sad when K5 takes over a case from you?’

‘I’m not sad, I’m happy. This is the kind of shit that’s only good for burning your fingers.’

‘And that’s why you’re rolling up your sleeves and plunging right into it by activating a private contact?’

‘Purely out of curiosity.’

‘Maybe you just wanted to see me again?’

Wegener didn’t respond for a moment.

‘I don’t trust K5,’ he said.

‘You don’t trust anyone,’ said Karolina.

‘Yes I do. You.’ Wegener took the photo out of his inside pocket and put it on the table. Karolina ignored the picture, looking him straight in the eyes.

‘Martin,’ she said. ‘Don’t get yourself in trouble.’

He pushed the photo further towards her. ‘Our victim’s about eighty. Nice suit, expensive watch. Might even have driven a Prius. Let’s just assume his death has something do with the gas business. Then he might well have worked at your ministry. And he wasn’t cleaning the pipelines, that’s for sure. You know the place inside out. And you’re the only person I know who knows the place inside out.’

‘I don’t know the whole place inside out,’ said Karolina. ‘The whole place is a monster, and it’s getting bigger every day.’

‘But you do know the well-dressed, longstanding management people, if you’re a half-decent gas whore.’

Karolina sighed, picked up the photo and held it up in front of her face. Her fingernails were painted rust-red. Matching her hair colour. Matching her handbag. Wegener got a shock. He'd only just noticed, beneath a dripping awning on Alexanderplatz, in the dim light of Wurst Wilfried's run-down, pale blue sausage-and-chips van, alongside a glowing heating soldier, that Karolina wasn't the same person as a year ago. Perhaps it was the ministry people who'd changed her. Or her career progress. Perhaps you had to coordinate your fingernails and handbag to your hair, as a section head. Perhaps you got promoted if you wore socialist colours particularly often. Karolina was tougher, cooler, more perfect than she used to be. Karolina was more successful. Karolina was even more beautiful. Karolina was further away than ever. And yet just as close as ever. Wegener turned away from her, going to the sales hatch to fetch another beer. When he got back to the table the photo was face-down on the yellow waxed tablecloth.

Karolina chewed.

Wegener drank.

'Afraid not. I'm pretty sure I'd have noticed him if he'd worked at the ministry.'

'Because of his age?'

'More the distinctive beard.'

'OK.' Wegener couldn't help feeling a slight sense of disappointment, awakening somewhere in his guts and now coming slowly to the surface. Karolina's memory was one of her sharpest weapons. If she didn't recognise the old man then she really had never seen him. That made a simple link to the consultations unlikely.

Karolina stared at her currywurst, pushing the end of a sausage around the cardboard tray with her wooden fork. Then she looked up at him. 'Now what?'

'I go to Old Father Borgs tomorrow. He gives me a non-disclosure agreement due to special investigation status whatever-it-is, and I'm off the case.'

Karolina skewered the last piece of sausage. 'It's probably better that way.'

'Absolutely.' Wegener swigged at his beer again.

'The whole thing makes me kind of nervous.' Karolina sounded anxious. Her cheeks were burning, the heating soldier reflected in her brown eyes as a glowing orange dot; there was a smudge of curry ketchup in the left corner of her mouth. Wegener had to force himself not to pick up a napkin and wipe the sauce off.

‘Why are you so sure K5 will take over the case?’

Wegener shrugged.

‘Martin, I know that look. I want to know what’s going on.’

‘Knowing that might be dangerous.’

‘No more dangerous than doing gas business with hormone-soaked, cocaine-crazed Russian kids.’

Wegener smiled.

‘Come on.’ Karolina looked him in the eyes. ‘You know what we swore to each other. And we swore that our separation wouldn’t change that either.’

‘It’ll never change anything.’ Wegener noticed that he still couldn’t utter the work separation. ‘Radical trust in radical times.’

‘Radical trust in radical times,’ Karolina repeated, taking his hand. ‘So?’

Wegener turned around. They were alone here. Wurst Wilfried was sorting beer bottles somewhere in the background, glass clinking against glass. The neon GOLDKRONE ad on the television tower was flashing in a wet blur, the EastSide Hotel rearing into the darkness like a giant glittery gherkin, a currency cock standing to attention, a daily reminder of the boundless potency of the market economy. The plasma mega-poster on the front façade was showing an advert for the new Phobos Flux convertible, Now with integrated Navodobro and extra port for Musikus-vi and other mp3 players: the new Flux convertible from Phobos – and at last there’s no more roof over your head. A couple of men ran towards the station through the dense curtain of hail, bent over, their collars drawn halfway up over their heads. Water dripped off the awning onto the pavement. Two slices of sausage were floating in a dark puddle like over-dimensional bait.

‘The dead man’s shoelaces were tied together,’ said Wegener. ‘He was hung by an executioner’s noose. Knotted eight times.’

Karolina lost control of her facial muscles.

‘You wanted to know.’

‘Martin!’ Karolina stared at him in disbelief. ‘You’ve almost been suspended once already!’

‘This is nothing to do with Früchtl! Nothing at all!’ Wegener realised he’d been speaking too loudly.

‘So why did you just mention him?’

‘Because I know what you’re thinking.’

‘Oh yes? And what am I thinking?’

‘Früchtl was... a tragic case. An exceptional situation.’

‘Oh yes? And that’s why I found you running around our flat like a madman back then, throwing everything that wasn’t nailed down and shouting and ranting for hours on end?’

‘I didn’t shout and rant for hours on end.’

‘This bloody system’s eaten up my best friend and there’s nothing I can do! Martin, I can still hear your every word, every single word!’

‘Don’t you worry, so can I.’

‘And now what?’

Wegener wanted to put the photo away but realised he didn’t have a hand free. Karolina was holding one of them in her manicured ministry fingers; the other was clutching the collar of his coat together as if he had to face a Siberian snowstorm.

‘Now what, Martin?’

Wegener tried to force himself to relax. ‘All I’m talking about here is facts. Shoelaces tied together, a rope with eight knots. That’s how we found the body. That’s all.’

Karolina was squeezing his hand so tightly now that it hurt. ‘Promise me you won’t get drawn into anything this time. Promise me, please!’

‘You think I want to get involved in a political...’

‘Promise me, Martin!’

Wegener pressed her hand back. There was astonishing strength in Karolina’s delicate fingers. Her heating soldier eyes skewered him like one of Wilfried’s broiled chickens, her hand and his hand cramped brutally together. A little more pressure and their bones would start breaking apart with a cracking and splintering.

‘Being close to you can get painful,’ Karolina pressed out, attempting a smile.

‘And to you,’ said Wegener. ‘All right. I promise.’

‘OK.’ She relaxed her grip.

All was silent for a few minutes. The trains must have halted in deference in the middle of their route. The station shone silent and abandoned. Wilfried had stopped

rattling his bottles. Only the rain couldn't help hailing down onto the asphalt as before. Their hands held each other tenderly now, with hesitant stroking fingers; they fit perfectly together, thought Wegener, it's as if our hands were still together, an inseparable couple, only the rest of us had to split up because I'm so weak-headed, weak-bodied, because I lose control of everything, but as long as hands can't let go of each other there must be hope for detectives and gas whores, there must be, even in this land without hope.

'You know what it would mean if it came out,' Karolina said at last, clearing her throat. 'For the consultations.' She let go of his hand.

Wegener nodded. He could see the woman of the past changing back to the other one, the saleswoman, the politician, the career woman.

'In four weeks, we have a unique opportunity for détente between the two Germanies.' Now Karolina was a lecturer summing up the overall political picture in her ministry section. 'Everything depends on it: the realignment of our energy contracts, currency, jobs, maybe even opening the borders. Strictly adhering to the EU's constitutional criteria. If anyone starts to think the Stasi's killing people, if anyone gets wind of it in West Germany, it'll all be over. The end of the rapprochement policy, all for nothing.'

'Who's going to find out?' Wegener tried to find a credibly reassuring tone, but felt he sounded more like credibly depressed. 'No one's even going to find out about it here.'

'Let's hope not.'

'And if it does get out,' Wegener said, putting the last piece of sausage in his mouth with his now free hand, 'then that's obviously just the way they wanted it.'

Karolina stared. 'Who on earth would want that?'

'The Stasi,' said Wegener, chewing. 'Do you know what goes on behind the scenes over there?' He swallowed the liquefied sausage. 'Do you really believe they didn't regroup after Revitalisation? Only better than before? Smaller? Less obvious? The Stasi's not the pruned-down, legal, harmless security service the Central Committee's always talking about. I've seen strange things over the past few years.'

'Now you're back to Früchtl again.'

Wegener felt the anger coming back. '*You're* the one going back to him! I'm

talking about my everyday work. There are cases where the Stasi dictates the investigation outcome. Cases they just take away from us. Endless surveillance orders, unauthorised wiretaps, dubious security levels.'

'But that's how every Western domestic intelligence agency works too.'

Karolina sounded as if she had to convince herself as well. 'Egon Krenz cleared the place out back then with Otto Schily, he still crows about it to every human rights activist in the northern hemisphere. There's not much else left of the Revitalisation – breaking up and restructuring the Stasi might be his only historical achievement! I hardly think he can afford to put something like that at stake. Never mind the fact that the secret service legislation is one of the prerequisites for the consultations.'

'And who keeps a check on it? Who monitors it?'

'Oh, Martin.'

'I'm sorry, but do you really trust a head of state who'll have you bugged without a judge's permission if need be?'

Wegener noticed he was losing grip of the conversation. 'A man who barricades you in to your own country? You trust him?'

Wurst Wilfried's fat head appeared in the van's sales hatch, rotated to the left, then right, then disappeared again.

'That's a different matter.' Karolina's surly mouth was back again. 'He kept his word in 1990 and opened the borders. What would you have done if your people were running away from you, at a rate of ten thousand a day? You'd have closed the wall again too, otherwise your own party would have given you the elbow. And you do need power if you want to make real changes.'

'*His* people!' Wegener picked up his cardboard tray and threw it in the bin. He wondered whether Karolina really believed what she was saying. Whether a person could change so much in a relatively short time. Whether the job in the ministry really had put her on the other side.

Karolina lit up a cigarette.

'I never said the Stasi committed this murder,' said Wegener. 'I presume they're not that stupid. All I said was that there might be people who don't want the West to gain more influence. For the borders to open again. There are some people who have it pretty good here.'

‘If I remember rightly, they used to say shoelaces tied together were a punishment for traitors,’ said Karolina. ‘In the old days, I mean.’

‘Yes.’ Wegener knew what was coming next. ‘They were. So they said.’

‘So why would the Stasi kill a traitor, twenty-two years after Revitalisation, four weeks before the consultations? A traitor who’s supposed to have betrayed what, exactly?’

‘I told you, they probably have nothing to do with it.’

‘Was the hanged man with the Stasi?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘The consultations have to be a success,’ said Karolina. ‘At all cost. That’s the only way. The only way to change anything here. Rapprochement means reforms, and reforms mean we’ll one day be attractive for all the West Germans fed up with self-service capitalism, greedy managers and incompetent bankers and criminal funds. Then even more of them will come over to us. And then Krenz can open up again, because nobody will be going anywhere any more.’

‘Maybe he’ll have to build the Wall higher. We’ll be so popular, the whole of West Germany will want to move over here.’

‘Your sarcasm will only make you lose more hair.’

‘Honestly, you sound like you’re talking to Lafontaine,’ said Wegener, wiping the ketchup from the corner of Karolina’s mouth with his paper napkin.

‘Maybe I will.’ Karolina drew her head back.

‘I’m going to be at the consultations. The sub-negotiators need first-hand information.’

‘They need pretty girls, that’s all.’

‘They can have them.’ Karolina picked up her handbag. She kissed Wegener half-heartedly on the cheek, left, right, left, as if they were outside a Parisian street café rather than an old wurst van on Alexanderplatz.

‘Will you take care of my gas bills for me?’

‘As soon as you’re an upright socialist.’ She smiled, then she turned away and left.

Wegener watched her go, saw her scurrying away, a perfect arse in perfect motion. His hand lay alone on the yellow waxed tablecloth, a tough, spat-out leftover

that Wilfried would clear away in a moment, chuck it in the pig-bin. The hail drifted into rain. Wegener got another beer.

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