



One thousand years later

Lothar Hempel

Every day a new pair of shoes. It has become a kind of ritual.

This morning Lilly picks up a pair of silver-grey Nike sneakers with light diodes in the heels that light up every footstep. Then she begins her patient daily trek through the streets, walking as if in a dream over stairways inside houses, through dormer windows onto roofs, and over scaffolding back to the sidewalk, descending manholes into the sewers, walking through subway tunnels, climbing up ladders and yet always ending up, hardly by chance, at the same places where she has started.

But now these places give a new and quite different impression, maybe because time has passed or because they have taken a new meaning in Lilly's inner map of the town.

The courageous edge of town. The shy harbour basin. The snotty shop window. She hasn't met anybody or spoken with anyone for months, but she doesn't miss it, because she is much too busy. She observes everything painstakingly and memorizes every change meticulously. The continuing decay of the town indicates simultaneously the birth of something new, something wonderfully new, as yet without a name.

A certain blue in the a poster, fading in the sunlight into grey. A certain kind of resistant weed originating from the park and expanding into the neighbouring streets. A mannequin who's false lashes fall to the ground. The dust covering one side of the street in a thicker layer than the other. The smell in a chapel slowly growing less noticeable with time, and finally disappearing altogether.

The revolving door of one of the big cinemas is open. The air inside is stale and acrid. She strolls slowly through the high entrance hall past the drinks machines and enters the theatre through the swinging doors. Her eyes slowly get use to the semi-darkness and she takes a seat in the first row.

'I have always sat in the first row' she thinks and looks at the big, pale rectangle of the screen in front of her. It's quite silent here, pleasantly silent. The chair is soft and Lilly is very tired and it's so nice to sit here. Is it a dream?

Suddenly an image appears on the screen, washed out and dark like an old photograph. A movement, cut short and a bit too slow. The colours become more pronounced, they are bluish and seem to come from far away. A figure moves towards camera.

'But that's Sissy, my Sissy!' shouts Lilly excitedly and she is startled because she hasn't heard her own voice for so long. The figure comes closer and soon her face fills out the entire screen. Big freckles on the pale, almost transparent skin. Small wrinkles show on her grinning face. The unreal hair.

'Hello, Lilly', says Sissy with a maniac laugh, swaying her hips while she hugs a tree.

'Hello, Sissy! I'm so happy to see you!' Lilly shouts back to her, laughing (she has never been happier).

Sissy: 'Shall we watch the films now?'

Lilly: 'Yes, all of them, and again and again, as long as you stay here with me!'

Sissy: 'We are sitting next to each other, very close and our elbows touch lightly on the arm of the chair.'

Lilly: 'And we are laughing about the same scenes!'

Sissy: 'Of course!'