

Christiane F.: THE KIDS OF ZOO STATION

Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo

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ENGLISH SAMPLE TRANSLATION

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The Prosecution

Excerpts from the indictment of the public prosecutor at the Berlin Regional Court dated 27 July 1977

The schoolgirl Christiane Vera F. is charged with having, as a juvenile with maturity of responsibility, continued to intentionally acquire substances or preparations subject to the provisions of the Narcotics Act in Berlin after 20 May 1976 without the required permission of the Federal Health Office.

The accused has been a heroin user since February 1976. She injected herself - at the beginning at intervals, later daily - approximately one scene quarter. She has been criminally responsible since 20 May 1976.

On the occasion of two controls on 1. and 13. March 1977, the accused was found and checked in the hall of Zoo station and at Kurfürstendamm underground station. She was carrying 18 mg and 140.7 mg of a substance containing heroin. Furthermore, on 12 May 1977, a tinfoil letter was found in the personal belongings of the accused, which also contained 62.4 mg of a substance containing heroin. Fixer's paraphernalia was also found on her. The PTU examination also revealed that some of the fixer's paraphernalia contained heroin. The urine sample also showed a morphine content.

On 12 May 1977, the accused's mother, Mrs. U. F., found 62.4 mg of a substance containing heroin in her daughter's personal belongings, which she sent to the criminal investigation department.

In her plea, the accused stated that she had been a heroin user since February 1976. She had also engaged in prostitution in the winter of 1976 in order to raise the money to buy heroin.

It must be assumed that the accused continues to use heroin.

The verdict

Excerpts from the judgement of the Neumünster District Court of 14 June 1978.

Judgement in the name of the people

In the criminal case against the pupil Christiane Vera F. for op. offences.

The defendant is guilty of continued acquisition of narcotics in combination with continued tax evasion. The decision whether to impose a juvenile sentence is suspended.

Grounds: The accused had undergone a normal development until she was 13 years old. She is of above-average intelligence and had quite grasped that the acquisition of heroin is an act punishable by law. It is true that there is sufficient evidence that the accused was already a drug addict on 20 May 1976 (before she reached the age of criminal responsibility). However, this did not preclude her criminal responsibility or her culpability. In the meantime, the accused had certainly recognised her situation and had made efforts to withdraw herself. She was therefore quite capable of recognising the wrongness of her behaviour and to act according to this insight.

The prognosis for the future is favourable at any rate at the present time, even though it cannot be said that a relapse can be ruled out in the case of the accused. The further development of the accused must be followed with attention at least in the near future.

It was insanely exciting. My mother packed suitcases and boxes for days. I realised that a new life was beginning for us.

I had turned six and after the move I was supposed to go to school. While my mother was packing non-stop and getting more and more nervous, I was at the farmer Völkel's almost all day. I waited for the cows to come into the barn for milking. I fed the sows and the chickens and romped in the hay with the others. Or I carried the young cats around. It was a wonderful summer, the first one I consciously experienced.

I knew that soon we were going far away, to a big city called Berlin. First my mother flew to Berlin alone. She wanted to take care of the flat first. My little sister and I and my father joined her a few weeks later. For us children, it was our first flight. Everything was tremendously exciting.

My parents had told wonderful stories about the huge flat with six large rooms where we would now live. And they wanted to earn a lot of money. My mother said we would have a big room all to ourselves. They wanted to buy great furniture. At that time, she explained exactly what our room should look like. I remember that because as a child I never stopped imagining that room. It became more and more beautiful in my imagination the older I got.

I have never forgotten what the flat looked like that we moved into. Probably because at first I had a primal horror of this flat. It was so big and empty that I was afraid of getting lost. If you spoke loudly, it echoed eerily.

There was only a few pieces of furniture in three rooms. In the children's room there were two beds and an old kitchen cupboard with our toys. In the second room there was a bed for my parents and in the largest room there was an old couch and a few chairs. That's how we lived in Berlin-Kreuzberg, on Paul-Lincke-Ufer.

After a few days, I dared to ride my bike alone in the street because there were children playing who were a bit older than me. In our village, the older ones had always played with the little ones and looked after them. The children in front of

our flat immediately said, "What is she doing here?" Then they took my bicycle away. When I got it back, one tire was flat and a mudguard was bent. My father told me off because the bicycle was broken. I then only rode the bike in our six rooms.

Three rooms were supposed to become an office. My parents wanted to open a marriage bureau there. But the desks and chairs my parents talked about never came. The kitchen cupboard stayed in the children's room.

One day, the sofa, beds and kitchen cabinet were loaded onto a truck and then taken to a high-rise building in Gropiusstadt. There we now had two and a half small rooms on the 11th floor. And all the nice things my mother had talked about wouldn't have fit into half the children's room.

Gropiusstadt, that's high-rise buildings for 45,000 people, with lawns and shopping centres in between. From a distance, everything looked new and very well-kept. But when you were between the high-rises, it stank of piss and poop everywhere. That came from the many dogs and the many children living in Gropiusstadt. It stank the most in the stairwells.

My parents scolded the redneck kids who littered the stairwell. But the redneck kids usually couldn't help it. I noticed that the first time I played outside and suddenly had to. By the time the lift finally came and I was on the 11th floor, I had wet my pants. My father beat me up. When I hadn't managed to get to our bathroom from downstairs in time a few times and got a beating, I also squatted somewhere where no one saw me. Since you can see into almost every corner from the high-rises, the stairwell was the safest place.

On the street, even in Gropiusstadt, I remained the stupid child from the countryside. I didn't have the same toys as the others. Not even a water pistol. I was dressed differently. I spoke differently. And I didn't know the games they played there. I didn't like them either. In our village, we often went by bike into the forest, to a stream with a bridge. There we had built dams and water castles. Sometimes all together, sometimes every man for himself. And when we broke it

up afterwards, we all agreed and had fun together. There was also no leader in our village. Everyone could make suggestions about what should be played. Then we scribbled around until one suggestion prevailed. It was no big deal if the older children gave in to the younger ones. It was a real children's democracy. In Gropiusstadt, in our block, a boy was the boss. He was the strongest and had the most beautiful water pistol. We often played robber captain. The boy was of course the robber captain. And the most important rule of the game was that we had to do everything he ordered.

Otherwise we played more against each other than with each other. It was always about annoying the other person in some way. For example, taking away a new toy and breaking it. The whole game was to get the other person down and to gain advantages for oneself, to conquer power and to show power.

The weakest got the most beatings. My little sister was not very robust and a bit scared. She was constantly trimmed and I couldn't help her.

I came to school. I was looking forward to school. My parents had told me that I always had to behave well and do what the teacher said. I took that for granted. In the village, we children had respect for every adult. And I think I was happy that now there would be a teacher at school whom the other children had to obey as well.

But it was very different at school. After just a few days, children were running around the class during lessons and playing wars. Our teacher was completely helpless. She always shouted "sit down". But then they just raged even harder and the others laughed.

I have loved animals since I was a very small child. Everyone in our family was crazy about animals. That's why I was proud of our family. I didn't know any family that was so fond of animals. And I felt sorry for the children whose parents didn't like animals and who didn't get animals as presents.

Over time, our two-and-a-half-room flat became a little zoo. I later had four mice, two cats, two rabbits, a budgie and Ajax, our brown Great Dane, whom we had already brought with us to Berlin.

Ajax always slept next to my bed. I let one arm dangle out of the bed when I fell asleep so I could feel him.

I found other children who also had dogs. I got on quite well with them. I discovered that outside Gropiusstadt, in Rudow, there were still real remnants of nature. We went there with our dogs. We played on the old rubbish tips in Rudow, which had been filled in with earth. Our dogs always played along. "Tracking dog" was our favourite game. One hid while his dog was held. Then the dog had to look for him. My Ajax had the best nose.

I sometimes took the other animals to the sandbox and even to school. Our teacher used them as visual aids in biology class. Some teachers also allowed Ajax to be with me during lessons. He never disturbed. He lay motionless next to my seat until the break bell rang.

I would have been quite happy with my animals if things hadn't gone from bad to worse with my father. While my mother worked, he sat at home. After all, it had not worked out with the marriage brokerage. Now my father was waiting for another job he liked. He sat on the scraped sofa and waited. And his insane outbursts of rage became more and more frequent.

My mother did schoolwork with me when she came home from work. For a while I had trouble telling the letters H and K apart. My mother explained this to me one evening with a monkey's patience. But I could hardly listen because I noticed how my father was getting angrier and angrier. I always knew when it was about to happen: he'd get the hand brush from the kitchen and start hitting me. Then I was supposed to explain the difference between H and K to him. Of course I didn't understand anything anymore, got my ass kicked once more and had to go to bed.

That was his way of doing schoolwork with me. He wanted me to be good and to become something better. After all, his grandfather still had a lot of money. He even owned a printing press and a newspaper in East Germany, among other things. After the war, everything had been expropriated in the GDR. Now my father freaked out when he thought I wouldn't be able to do something at school. There were evenings that I still remember in detail. Once I had to draw houses in my arithmetic book. They had to be six boxes wide and four boxes high. I had already finished a house and knew exactly how to do it when my father suddenly sat down next to me. He asked me from where to where the next house had to be drawn. I was so scared that I stopped counting the boxes and started guessing. Every time I pointed to a wrong box, I got one taped to me. When I was crying and couldn't give any more answers, he went to the gum tree. I already knew what that meant. He pulled the bamboo stick that held the rubber tree out of the flowerpot. Then he thrashed my bottom with the bamboo stick until you could literally peel off the skin.

My fear started when I was eating. If I spilled, I had a thing. If I knocked something over, he spanked me. I hardly dared touch my milk glass. Out of sheer fear, some kind of accident happened to me at almost every meal.

In the evenings, I always asked my father sweetly if he wasn't going away. He went away quite often and we three women would take a deep breath. Those evenings were wonderfully peaceful. But when he came home in the night, there could be another disaster. He usually had something to drink. Any little thing and he would go completely berserk. It could be toys or clothes that were lying around untidily. My father always said that order was the most important thing in life. And if he saw a mess at night, he would drag me out of bed and hit me. My little sister got some afterwards too. Then my father threw our things on the floor and ordered us to put everything back in order in five minutes. Most of the time we didn't manage to do that and got beaten up again.

My mother usually stood in the doorway crying. She rarely dared to defend us because he would then hit her too. Only Ajax, my Great Dane, often jumped in between. She whined very high and had very sad eyes when there was a beating in the family. She was the one who was most likely to bring my father to his senses, because he loved dogs like we all did. He had yelled at Ajax once, but never hit him.

Nevertheless, I somehow loved and respected my father. I thought he was vastly superior to other fathers. But above all, I was afraid of him. Yet I thought it was quite normal that he lashed out so often. It was no different at home with other children in Gropiusstadt. Sometimes they even had real black eyes on their faces, and so did their mothers. There were fathers who lay around drunk on the street or in the playground. My father never got that drunk. And it also happened in our street that pieces of furniture flew out of the tower blocks onto the street, women screamed for help and the police came. So it wasn't that bad with us. My father was always telling my mother that she was spending too much money. But she earned the money. She would sometimes tell him that most of it went on his booze, his wives and the car. Then the quarrel became physical.

The car, the Porsche, was probably what my father loved most. He serviced it almost every day when it wasn't in the workshop. There probably wasn't a second Porsche in Gropiusstadt. At least not an unemployed person with a Porsche.

Of course, at that time I had no idea what was going on with my father, why he was constantly going berserk. It only dawned on me later when I also talked to my mother more often about my father. Gradually, I saw through a lot. He just couldn't cope. He kept trying to get high and fell on his ass every time. His father despised him for it. Grandpa had already warned my mother against marrying the good-for-nothing. My grandfather had always had big plans for my father. He wanted the family to be as great as it had been before the GDR expropriated all their property.

If he hadn't met my mother, he might have become an estate manager and had his own Great Dane kennel. He was learning to be an estate manager when he met my mother. She got pregnant with me, he broke off his apprenticeship and married her. At some point he must have got the idea that my mother and I were to blame for his misery. All he had left of all his dreams was his Porsche and a couple of flashy friends.

He not only hated family, he just totally rejected it. It went so far that none of his friends were allowed to know that he was married and had children. When we met friends of his or when acquaintances picked him up at home, I always had to address him as "Uncle Richard". I was so programmed with punches that I never made a mistake there. As soon as other people were around, he was my uncle. It was no different with my mother. She was never allowed to say in front of his friends that she was his wife, and especially not to behave like his wife. I think he always passed her off as his sister.

My father's friends were younger than him. They still had their lives ahead of them, or at least that's what they thought. My father wanted to be one of them. One for whom everything was just beginning. And not one who had already saddled himself with a family he couldn't even feed. That's how it was with my father.

At the age of six to eight, of course, I had no perspective at all. My father only confirmed to me the rule of life that I had already learned on the street and at school: hit or be hit. My mother, who had had enough beatings in her life, had come to the same conclusion. She always told me: "Never start anything. But if someone hurts you, hit back. As hard and as long as you can." She herself could no longer hit back.

I learned the game slowly: power over others myself or be oppressed. At school, I started with the weakest teacher. I was constantly shouting something into the classroom. The others now laughed at me. When I did the same with the stricter teachers, I finally found real recognition among my classmates.

I had learned how to assert myself in Berlin: always have a big mouth. Preferably the biggest one of all. Then you can play boss. After being so successful with my mouth, I also dared to try out my muscles. Actually, I wasn't very strong. But I could get angry. And then I also knocked down the stronger ones. I was almost happy afterwards when someone was stupid to me at school and I met him again in front of the school. Most of the time I didn't have to get physical. The children simply had respect for me.

I was eight by now. My most ardent wish was to grow up quickly, to be an adult like my father, to have real power over other people. What power I had, I tried out in the meantime.

My father had found work at some point. Not one that made him happy, but one that earned him money for his boozes and his Porsche. I was therefore alone at home in the afternoons with my sister, who was a year younger. I had found a girlfriend two years older. I was proud to have an older girlfriend. With her I was even stronger.

With my little sister, we played the game we had learned almost every day. When we came home from school, we would pick cigarette butts out of ashtrays and rubbish bins. We'd smooth them out, put them between our lips and puff. If my sister also wanted a fag, she got something on her fingers. We ordered her to do the housework, washing up, dusting and whatever else our parents had told us to do. Then we took our doll prams, locked the flat door behind us and went for a walk. We locked my sister in until she had done the chores.

At that time, when I was about eight or nine, a pony farm opened in Rudow. We were very angry at first, because pretty much the last piece of free nature we could escape to with our dogs was fenced in and cut down for the pony farm. But then I got on quite well with the people there and did stable work and horse care. For this work I was allowed to ride freely for a few quarters of an hour a week. Of course, I thought that was crazy.

I loved the horses and the donkey they had there. But there was something else that fascinated me about riding. I could prove again that I had strength and power. The horse I was riding was stronger than me. But I could force it under my will. If I fell off, then I had to get back on. Until the horse obeyed me.

It didn't always work out with the stable chores. Then I needed money to be able to ride for at least a quarter of an hour. We rarely got pocket money. That's when I started cheating a bit. I cashed in the discount coupon books and took the beer bottles away from my father to get the deposit money.

I also started stealing when I was ten. I stole from the supermarkets. Things we couldn't get otherwise. Especially sweets. Almost all the other children were allowed to eat sweets. My father said that sweets made your teeth bad.

In Gropiusstadt, you simply learned automatically to do what was forbidden. For example, it was forbidden to play anything that was fun. In fact, everything was forbidden. There is a sign on every corner in Gropiusstadt. The so-called parks between the high-rise buildings are sign parks. Of course, most of the signs forbid children to do anything.

Later, I copied down the sayings on the signs for my diary. The first sign was already on our front door. In the stairwell and around our high-rise building, children were only allowed to tiptoe around. Playing, romping, roller-skating or cycling - forbidden. Then came lawns and at every corner the sign: "Do not walk on the lawn." The signs were in front of every bit of green. We weren't even allowed to sit on the grass with our dolls. Then there was a puny rose bed and another big sign in front of it: "Protected green spaces". Underneath this sign was a paragraph according to which one was punished if one came too close to the puny roses.

So we were only allowed in the playground. A few high-rise buildings always had a playground. It consisted of pissed sand and a few broken climbing frames and of course a huge sign. The sign was in a real iron box, under glass, and there were bars in front of the glass so we couldn't destroy it. So the sign said

"playground rules" and underneath that the children should "use it for enjoyment and recreation". However, we were not allowed to "relax" when we felt like it. Because what came next was underlined in thick letters, "... between the hours of 8am and 1pm and 3pm and 7pm." So when we came home from school, there was no rest.

My sister and I were not allowed to go to the playground because the sign said that we were only allowed to play there "with the consent and under the supervision of the legal guardian". And only very quietly: "The need for peace and quiet of the house community is to be maintained through special consideration. You were just allowed to throw a rubber ball to each other. Otherwise: "Ball games of a sporting nature are not permitted." No dodgeball, no football. For the boys, that was especially bad. They took out their excess energy on the playground equipment and benches and, of course, on the prohibition signs. It must have cost a lot of money to replace the broken signs again and again.

The caretakers watched over the observance of the prohibitions. I had already shat on our caretaker pretty quickly. After we moved to Gropiusstadt, I was already bored with the concrete and sand playground with the little tin slide. Then I found something interesting. The gullies in the concrete through which the rainwater was supposed to run off. At that time, you could still lift off the grating above the drain. Later they fixed it. So I lifted the grate off and threw all kinds of crap into the gully with my sister. Then the caretaker came, grabbed us and dragged us into the caretaker's office. There we both, six and five years old, had to give our personal details. As well as we could. My parents were notified and my father had a good reason to beat us up. I didn't quite understand why it was so bad to block the drain. In our village by the stream, we had done completely different things without any adult ever complaining. But I roughly understood that in Gropiusstadt you were only allowed to play what the adults

had planned. That is, sliding and digging in the sand. That it was dangerous to have your own ideas when playing.

The next meeting with the caretaker that I remember was more serious. It happened like this: I went for a walk with Ajax, my Great Dane, and got the idea to pick flowers for my mother. Like I used to do on almost every walk in our village. But there were only the measly roses between the tower blocks. I made my fingers bloody to pick a few flowers from the shrub roses. I still couldn't read the sign "Protected Garden Area" or just didn't get it.

But I understood immediately when I saw the caretaker running across the no-go lawn, shouting and flailing. I got panicky about the guy and shouted, "Ajax, look out!"

My Ajax, of course, immediately pricked up his ears, a few hackles went up, Ajax stiffened and looked at the guy with the most evil eyes he could make. The guy immediately went backwards across the lawn and didn't dare shout again until he was in front of the house entrance. I was glad, but hid the flowers, because I suspected that I had done something forbidden again.

When I arrived home, the property management had already called. They said I had threatened the caretaker with a dog. Instead of the kiss from my mum that I had wanted to get with the flowers, I got a beating from my dad.

In summer, the heat was sometimes unbearable. The heat was literally stored and radiated back by concrete, asphalt and stones. The few measly trees provided no shade. And the wind was kept out by the high-rise buildings. There was neither a swimming pool nor a paddling pool. Only a fountain in the middle of our concrete square. We sometimes splashed and splashed there. It was forbidden, of course, and we were always chased away quickly.

Then the time came when we wanted to play marbles. But where can you find a place in Gropiusstadt where you can play marbles? You can't play marbles on concrete, asphalt or grass with a "no trespassing" sign. Nor can you mumble in

the sandbox. Because to play marbles, you need a reasonably solid surface in which you can dig small holes.

We found an almost ideal marble run. Under the maple trees they had planted in our neighbourhood. To prevent the trees from suffocating under all the asphalt, a circular opening had been left in the asphalt for them. The circle around the trunk was made of firm, clean and smoothly raked earth. Simply ideal for murmuring.

But now, when we dug our little hollows for marble playing there, we not only had the caretakers on our backs, but also the gardeners. We were evicted again and again under wild threats. One day, however, the evictors had a good idea. They no longer raked the earth smooth, but dug it up. That was the end of the marble play.

When it rained, the entrance halls of the houses were a fantastic roller skating rink. In any case, these large hallways would have been fantastic. Since there were no flats downstairs, not even the noise bothered anyone. In fact, when we tried a few times, no one complained either. Except for the caretaker's wife. She said that roller skating left marks on the floor. So it was nothing. Except for my father's assful.

When the weather was bad, it was really shitty in Gropiusstadt for us kids. None of us were allowed to bring friends into the flat. The children's rooms were much too small. Almost all the children got half the room, just like us. When it rained, I sometimes sat at the window and thought about what we used to do when it rained. We used to carve, for example. We were really prepared for rainy weather. We'd get thick pieces of oak bark in the forest and carve little boats out of them when the weather was bad. And when it rained for too long, we couldn't stand it any longer. Then we put on rain gear and went down to the stream to try out our boats. We built harbours and had real races with our boats made of oak bark.

Hanging around between the skyscrapers in the rain was really no fun. We had to come up with something. Something that was insanely forbidden. There was that too: playing with the lifts.

First of all, of course, it was about teasing other children. So we grabbed a child, locked him in a lift and pushed all the buttons. We held on to the other lift. Then it had to jerk up to the top floor, stopping at every floor. They often did the same with me. Especially when I came back with my dog and had to be home in time for supper. Then they pushed all the buttons and it took a miserably long time until I was on the eleventh floor, and Ajax became insanely nervous.

It was mean to push all the buttons for someone who wanted to go up because he had to pee. He ended up peeing in the lift. But it was even meaner to take a cooking spoon away from a child. All the little children only went outside with a wooden spoon. Because we could only reach the lift buttons with a long wooden cooking spoon. So without a wooden spoon you were totally lost. If you lost it or other children took it away, you had to traipse up eleven floors on foot. Because the other children wouldn't help you, of course, and the adults thought you just wanted to play in the lift and break it.

The lifts were often broken and we were not blameless. We also had real races with the lifts. They all went at the same speed, but there were a few tricks that could save a few seconds. You had to close the outer door quickly, but with a lot of feeling. Because if you slammed it too hard, it would open again a little. The security door closed automatically, but if you held it shut with your hands, it closed faster. Or sometimes it broke. I was pretty good at competing in lifts. Our 13 floors were soon no longer enough. In addition, the caretaker was of course constantly on our heels. So the pavement was getting hotter and hotter in our house. But it was strictly forbidden for children to enter other houses. We couldn't get in there either because we didn't have a house key. But there was always a second entrance. For furniture and other large objects. It was locked with a grille. I found out how to get through the bars. Head first. It was really

tricky how you had to turn your head to get through. Then we squeezed the body through somehow. Only the fat ones couldn't go.

I opened the way to a real lift paradise. A house with 32 floors and incredibly sophisticated lifts. That's when we discovered all the things you can do with lifts. We especially liked to play hopscotch. If everyone jumped up together during the ride, the thing stopped. The safety door would open. Or the safety door didn't close at all. In any case, a hop ride like that was a pretty exciting thing.

Then a sensational trick: if you pressed the switch for the emergency brake to the side instead of down, the safety door stayed open even while driving. That's when you realised how fast these things went. Concrete and lift doors whizzed past us at a crazy speed.

The sharpest test of courage was to press the alarm button. Then a bell went off and the caretaker's voice came through a loudspeaker. Then it was time to run for it. In a house with 32 floors you have a good chance of escaping the caretaker. He was always on the lookout anyway, but rarely caught us.

The most exciting game in bad weather was the basement game. It was also the most forbidden. We somehow found a way into the basement of the high-rise building. There, each tenant had a box made of wire mesh. The bars didn't go all the way to the ceiling. So you could climb over the top. That's where we played hide and seek. It was called "hide and seek with everything". You could climb in everywhere to hide. It was incredibly creepy. It was creepy in and of itself among all the strange stuff in pretty dim light. Then there was the fear that someone might come. We suspected that we were doing something like the most forbidden thing ever.

Then we also played who found the greatest things in the boxes. Toys, junk or clothes that we put on. Afterwards, of course, we didn't really know where we got the stuff, so we just threw it in somewhere. Sometimes we even took something really great. Of course it came out that someone had "broken in"

down there. But they never caught us. So you learned quite automatically that everything that is allowed is incredibly bland and that the forbidden is fun. The shopping centre opposite our house was also more or less forbidden territory for us. There was a very wild caretaker who always shooed us. He was wildest when I came near with my dog. He said we made all the dirt in the shopping centre. It was really stinky there if you looked and looked closely. The shops acted one finer and more posh and modern than the other. But the rubbish bins behind them were constantly overflowing and stinking. You stepped in melted ice cream or dog shit everywhere and kicked beer cans and Coke cans. The caretaker there was supposed to clean it all up in the evening. No wonder he lurked all day to catch someone making a mess. But he couldn't do anything about the shopkeepers who threw the rubbish next to the bins. He didn't dare go near the drunken youths who threw beer cans around. And the grannies with their dogs only gave him snotty answers. So, in his primal rage, he stuck to the children.

They didn't like us in the shops either. When one of us got pocket money or had otherwise scammed money, he went to the coffee shop where there were also sweets. And the others would follow, of course, because it was a small event. It really annoyed the shop assistants when half a dozen children came into the shop and then started palavering about what to buy for the few pennies. We somehow came to hate the shopkeepers and thought it was good if one of us stole from them.

There was also a travel agency in the shop centre, where we often pressed our noses against the glass until we were shooed away. In the shop window there were wonderful pictures of palm trees, beaches, negroes and wild animals. A model of an aeroplane hung between them. And we used to pretend that we were sitting in the plane and flying to that beach and climbing the palm trees from which rhinos and lions could be seen.

Next to the travel agency was the "Bank for Trade and Industry". At that time we didn't wonder what a bank for trade and industry was doing in Gropiusstadt, of all places, where people live who at best get their wages from trade and industry. We liked the bank. The fine gentlemen in the smart suits were never unfriendly to us. They were not as busy as the women in the coffee shop. I could exchange the pennies I had stolen from my mother's penny bottle for pennies. Because in the coffee shop they went crazy if you paid with pennies. And we always got some kind of savings animal if we said please. Maybe the nice gentlemen thought we needed so many savings animals because we saved so diligently. But I never put a penny into them. We played zoo with the elephants and pigs in the sandbox.

When the pranks got worse and worse, they built a so-called adventure playground. I don't know what the people who plan such things mean by adventure. But these things are probably not called that because children are allowed to do really adventurous things there, but because the adults are supposed to believe that their children can experience really great things there. The thing certainly cost a lot of money. In any case, they spent a long time building it. And when we were finally allowed on it, friendly social workers welcomed us: "Well, what would you like to do? The adventure was that you were constantly supervised on this playground.

There were real tools and finely planed boards and nails. So you were allowed to build something. And a social worker made sure that you didn't hit your fingers with a hammer. Once a nail was in, it was in. Then nothing could be changed. But before something was finished, you wanted it to look completely different. I once told a social worker how we used to build things, caves and real tree huts. Without a hammer and without a single nail. We made them out of whatever boards and branches we found. And every day when we went back, we tinkered with it again and changed everything. And that was the fun. The social worker certainly understood me. But he had his responsibilities and his rules.

In the beginning, we had our own ideas about what we could do in the adventure playground. We wanted to play Stone Age family and cook a real pea soup over a fire. The social worker thought that was a great idea. But unfortunately, he said, we couldn't cook pea soup. Didn't we want to build a hut? With hammer and nails - in the Stone Age.

Soon the playground was closed again. They told us they wanted to rebuild it so we could play in bad weather. Then iron beams were unloaded, concrete mixers came and a construction crew. They built a concrete bunker with windows. Seriously, like a real concrete bunker. Not a log cabin or anything, but a concrete block. The windows were smashed in after a few days. I don't know if the windows were all smashed by the boys because the concrete made them so aggressive. Or whether they built our playhouse as a bunker because everything in Gropiusstadt that wasn't made of iron or concrete broke down. The thick concrete silo now took up a large part of the adventure playground. Then they built a school right next to it and it got its own playground, the one with a tin slide, climbing frame and a few vertically buried wooden planks behind which you could pee quite well. The school playground was built into the adventure playground and partitioned off with wire mesh. There wasn't much of an adventure playground left.

In the little bit of adventure playground that was left, the older boys, whom we called rockers, became more and more prevalent. They arrived in the afternoon already drunk, terrorised the children and simply broke things. Destroying things was about their only occupation. The social workers were no match for them. By then, the adventure playground was usually closed anyway.

In return, we children got a real attraction. They built a toboggan run. That was great the first winter. We could choose our own slopes from the mountain. We had a death run and easy runs. The boys we called rockers made it dangerous. They made chains with the sledges and really tried to run us down. But you could

avoid them on other slopes. The days with snow were some of my best days in Gropiusstadt.

In spring, it was almost as much fun on the toboggan hill. We ran around with our dogs and rolled down the slopes. The best thing was to ride around on the bike. The descents were crazy. It looked more dangerous than it was. Because if you fell, you fell softly on the grass.

They soon forbade us to play on the toboggan run. They said it was a toboggan run, not a playground and certainly not a cycling track. The grass had to recover and so on. We were so old now that we didn't care about prohibitions at all, and went on to the sledding hill. Then one day the men from the horticultural office came and put a real barbed wire enclosure around the sledding hill. We only gave in for a few days. Then someone got a wire cutter and we cut a hole in the barbed wire big enough for dogs and bicycles to get through. When they patched the hole again, we cut it again.

A few weeks later, construction crews arrived again. They began to wall up our toboggan run, to cement it over, to asphalt it. Our death run became a staircase. Asphalted paths cut through almost all the slopes. Concrete slabs were put on the platform at the top. A strip of grass remained as a toboggan run.

In summer, there was nothing to do on the mountain. In winter, it was life-threatening on the one track. But the worst thing was going up. Now you had to go up stone slabs and stairs. They were constantly iced over. We got skinned knees, bumps on the head and, if it got bad, a concussion.

Everything just got more and more perfect as time went on in Gropiusstadt. When we moved there, the magnificent model estate was not yet finished. Especially outside the high-rise district, many things were not yet perfect. In small excursions, which even we younger children could do on our own, we reached really paradisiacal playgrounds.

The most beautiful one was at the Wall, which is not far from Gropiusstadt. There was a strip that we called a little forest or no-man's land. It was barely 20 metres

wide and at least one and a half kilometres long. Trees, bushes, grass as high as we were, old boards, water holes.

There we climbed, played hide and seek, felt like explorers, discovering every day a part of the primeval forest that was unknown to us until then. We could even make campfires there and roast potatoes and give smoke signals.

At some point they noticed that children from Gropiusstadt were playing and having fun. Then the squads moved in again and tidied up the place. Then they put up prohibition signs. Nothing was allowed any more, really everything was forbidden: Cycling, climbing trees, letting dogs run free. The policemen, who were constantly hanging around because of the wall, checked that the prohibition signs were being observed. Supposedly, our no-man's land was now a bird sanctuary. A little later they turned it into a rubbish dump.

Then there was the old rubbish heap, covered with earth and sand, where we often played with our dogs. It was secured against us first with barbed wire, then with high fences, before they started to build a lookout restaurant there.

It was also beautiful on a few fields that were no longer cultivated by the farmers. Corn and cornflowers and poppies and grass and nettles still grew there, so high that you soon sank up to your head in them. The state had bought the fields to turn them into real recreational areas. Piece by piece they were fenced off. On one part of the old fields the pony farm spread out, on the other tennis courts were built. There was really nothing left where we could go to get out of Gropiusstadt.

My sister and I at least worked and rode at the pony farm. At first you could still ride out wherever you wanted. Then riding was banned on all roads and paths. They had built an extra bridle path. Nice with sand and what a proper bridle path should look like. Must have cost a lot of money. This bridle path led directly along the railway tracks. There was just two horse-widths of space between the fence and the rails. There you rode, and the coal goods trains thundered past. There is probably no horse that doesn't freak out when a coal goods train

thunders past a few metres away. Our horses, at least, usually went through. And you just thought, I hope the horse doesn't run into the train. But I was really better off than the other children, I had my animals. Sometimes I took my three mice to the sandbox in the playground. At least the playground rules didn't say "mice forbidden". We built them corridors and caves and let them run in them. One afternoon a mouse ran into the grass, which we were not allowed to enter. We did not find it again. I was a bit sad, but I consoled myself with the thought that the mouse would like it much better outside than in the cage.

On the evening of that day, of all days, my father came into the children's room, looked into the mouse cage and asked very strangely: "Why are there only two? Where is the third mouse?" I didn't sense any mischief yet when he asked so strangely. My father had never liked mice and kept telling me to give them away. I told him that the mouse had run away from me in the playground.

My father looked at me like a madman. I knew that he was totally freaking out now. He screamed and immediately hit me. He hit and I was trapped in my bed and couldn't get out. He had never hit me like that before and I thought he was going to beat me to death. When he started hitting my sister too, I had a few seconds of air and instinctively tried to get to the window. I think I would have jumped out, from the 11th floor.

But my father grabbed me and threw me back on the bed. My mother was probably standing in the doorway crying again, but I didn't see her at all. I only saw her when she threw herself between my father and me. She was beating my father with her fists.

He was completely out of his mind. He beat my mother in the corridor. I was suddenly more afraid for my mother than for myself. I went after him. My mother tried to escape into the bathroom and close the door in front of him. But my father held her by the hair. There was laundry soaking in the bathtub, as there was every evening. We hadn't had enough to buy a washing machine

before. My father pushed my mother's head into the full bathtub. Somehow she got free again. I don't know if my father let her go or if she freed herself.

My father disappeared into the living room, pale as a sheet. My mother went to the cloakroom and put on her coat. Without saying a word, she left the flat. That was probably one of the most terrible moments in my life, when my mother simply walked out of the flat without saying a word and left us alone. At first I just thought, now he'll come back and keep on beating. But it was quiet in the living room except for the TV, which was on.

I pulled my sister into bed with me. We embraced each other. My sister had to pee. She didn't dare go to the bathroom and was shaking. But she also didn't dare to wet the bed, because there was a spanking on it. At some point I took her by the hand and took her to the bathroom. My father said "good night" to us from the living room.

The next morning, no one woke us up. We didn't go to school. Sometime in the morning my mother came back. She hardly said a word. She packed up some of our things, put Peter, the cat, in a bag and told me to put Ajax on a leash. Then we went to the underground. For the next few days we stayed with a colleague of my mother's at work in a small flat. My mother explained to us that she wanted to get a divorce.

The colleague's flat was too small for my mother, my sister, Ajax, Peter and me. Anyway, after a few days, the colleague acted quite annoyed. So my mother packed the few things again, we took the animals and drove back to Gropiusstadt.

My father came into the flat when my sister and I were sitting in the bathtub. He went to us in the bathroom and said in such a normal tone, as if nothing was going on at all: "Why did you go away? You really don't need to sleep with strangers. The three of us would have made ourselves comfortable." My sister and I just looked at each other stupidly. My father pretended not to see my

mother that night. Then he looked past us as if we weren't even there. And he didn't say a word to us either. That was somehow worse than the beatings. My father never hit me again. But the fact that he now acted as if he no longer belonged to us was terrible. Now I really felt that he was my father. I had never hated him, only been afraid of him. I had always been proud of him. Because he loved animals, and because he had such a powerful car, his '62 Porsche. Now he was somehow no longer our father, although he still lived with us in the small flat. Then something very bad happened: Ajax, my Great Dane, got a hernia and died. There was no one there to comfort me. My mother was completely preoccupied with herself and the divorce. She cried a lot and didn't laugh at all. I felt very lonely.

When the doorbell rang one evening and I opened the door, it was Klaus, a friend of my father. Klaus wanted to pick up my father for a pub crawl. But he had already left.

My mother asked the guy to come in. He was much younger than my father. In his early twenties. And this Klaus then suddenly asked my mother if she didn't want to go out for dinner with him. My mother immediately said, "Yes, why not?" She changed her clothes, went off with the man and left us alone. Other children might have been angry, afraid for their mother. I probably had such feelings for a moment. But then I was honestly happy for my mother. She had looked really happy when she left, even if she hadn't shown it like that. My sister felt the same way as I did and said: "Mum was really happy."

Klaus came over more often now when my father wasn't there. It was a Sunday, I remember it well, when my mother sent me to take down the bins. When I came back up, I was very quiet. Maybe I was very quiet on purpose. When I looked into the living room, I saw that Klaus was kissing my mother.

I felt all funny. I crept into my room. The two of them hadn't seen me. And I didn't talk to anyone about what I had seen. Not even to my sister, from whom I usually had no secrets.

The man who always came now gave me the creeps. But he was nice to us. He was especially nice to my mother. She laughed again and didn't cry at all. She also started dreaming again. She talked about the room my sister and I would get when we moved into a new flat with Klaus. But we didn't have the flat yet. And my father didn't move out of our place. Not even when they were finally divorced. My parents slept in the marriage bed and hated each other. And we still didn't have any money.

And when we finally had a flat, one underground station away, in Rudow, things weren't so ideal either. Klaus was now almost always there and he was kind of in the way. He was actually still nice. But he was just between my mother and me. I didn't accept him inside. I didn't want to be told anything by this man who was in his early twenties. I reacted more and more aggressively to him.

Then we also got into a fight with each other. Over little things. Sometimes I provoked the quarrel. Mostly it was about playing records. For my 11th birthday, my mother had bought me a record player, a little "Funzel", and I had a few records, disco sound, teen music. And in the evenings I would put on a record and turn up the dial so high that it made my ears tear up. One evening Klaus came into the children's room and told me to turn down the record player. I didn't. He came back and ripped the arm off the record. I put it back on and stood in front of the record player so that he couldn't reach it. Then he grabbed me and pushed me away. When this man touched me, I freaked out.

When we had these fights, my mother usually took my side carefully. That was also stupid, because then it turned into a fight between Klaus and my mother and I felt somehow guilty. There was someone too much in the flat.

It wasn't that there was occasional noise that was bad. What was bad was when everything was quiet at home, when we were all sitting in the living room and Klaus was leafing through a magazine or switching on the TV, when my mother tried to talk to us and to her boyfriend and no one reacted properly. Then it was just incredibly uncomfortable. My sister and I noticed that there were too many

of us in the living room. And when we said we wanted to go out again, no one objected. At least Klaus, it seemed to us, was really happy when we were outside. That's why we stayed out as often and as long as possible.

Looking back, I don't blame Klaus at all. He was only in his early twenties. He didn't know what a family was. He didn't really understand how much our mother was attached to us and how much we were attached to our mother. That we actually needed my mother completely in the short time we saw her in the evenings and on weekends. He was probably jealous of us and we were certainly jealous of him. My mother wanted to be there for us and not lose her boyfriend and was overwhelmed again.

I reacted loudly and aggressively to this situation. My sister, however, became more and more silent and suffered. She certainly didn't know exactly what she was suffering from. But she often talked about moving in with my father. That was a crazy idea for me, after all we had been through with my father. But now he actually offered us to come to him. He was a changed man since he left us. He had a young girlfriend. And he always seemed to be in a good mood when we met him. He acted incredibly nice. And he was, actually. He gave me a Great Dane again, a bitch.

I turned twelve, got a bit of boobs and started to get interested in boys and men in a very strange way. They were strange creatures to me. They were all brutal. The older boys on the street as well as my father and, in his own way, Klaus. I was afraid of them. But they also fascinated me. They were strong and had power. They were the way I would have liked to be. Their power, their strength, at least, attracted me.

I started to blow-dry my hair occasionally. I cut my hair a little shorter in front with nail scissors and combed it to the side. I fooled around with my hair because sometimes people told me I had such nice long hair. I didn't want to wear the silly chequered children's trousers anymore, I wanted jeans. I got jeans. I really wanted high-heeled shoes. My mother gave me an old pair of hers.

With my jeans and high heels, I walked the streets almost every evening until ten. I felt like I was being singled out at home. But I also loved the freedom I had. Maybe I even enjoyed arguing with Klaus. It gave me a feeling of strength to argue with an adult.

My sister could not bear all this. She did the unthinkable for me. She moved in with my father. She left my mother and, above all, me. I was now a little lonelier. For my mother, however, it was a tremendous blow. She cried again. She stood there between her children and her boyfriend and again could not cope with the problem.

I thought my sister would come back quickly. But she liked it with her father. She got pocket money. He paid for her riding lessons and gave her a pair of real riding breeches. For me, that was pretty hard. I had to continue earning my riding lessons by working in the stable. But that didn't always work out and my sister with her fancy breeches was soon riding better than me.

But then I got compensation. My father invited me on a trip to Spain. I had got a very good report card at the end of grade 6 and was put forward for the Gymnasium. I was registered at the comprehensive school in Gropiusstadt. So before a new phase of my life began, which was to end with the Abitur, I flew to Spain, to Torremolinos, with my father and his girlfriend. It was a perfect holiday. My father was great. I realised that in a way he loved me too. He treated me almost like an adult now. I was even allowed to go out with him and his girlfriend in the evening.

He had really come to his senses. He now had friends of the same age and he had told everyone that he had already been married. I no longer had to call him Uncle Richard. I was his daughter. And he seemed really proud that I was his daughter. However, typical for him: he had scheduled the holiday in a way that suited him and his friends best. At the end of my holidays. And I was two weeks late for my new school. So I started playing truant right away.

I then felt very strange in the new school. Friendships and cliques had already formed in the class. I sat alone. But the most important thing was that during the two weeks I had been in Spain, they had explained the comprehensive school system to the others, which is quite complicated when you come from primary school. The others had been helped to choose the courses they wanted to take. I was now pretty much on my own. I didn't have a clue at all about this school. I was never going to get it. There was no longer a class teacher like in primary school who could look after the individual pupils. Each teacher taught a few hundred pupils in different classes and courses. If you want to do the Abitur at a comprehensive school, you have to know for yourself which way to go. You have to decide voluntarily to study. You have to do something to get into the extension courses. Or you have parents who say, do this, do that, and keep up the pressure. I just couldn't get my head around it.

I felt unappreciated at school. The others had that two-week head start. That's a big head start in a new school. I tried my recipe from primary school here too. I interrupted the teachers with heckling, I contradicted. Sometimes because I was right, and sometimes just because. I fought once again. Against the teachers and the school. I wanted recognition.

The strongest guy in our class was a girl. Her name was Kessi. She already had real breasts. She looked at least two years older than the rest of us and was also more mature. She was fully recognised by everyone. I admired her. My greatest wish was that Kessi would become my girlfriend.

Kessi also had an incredibly strong boyfriend. He went to the parallel class, but was already older. His name was Milan. He was at least 1.70 tall, had long, black, curly hair that went down to his shoulders. He wore tight jeans and very smart boots. All the girls had a crush on Milan. And Kessi was fully accepted not only because of her bosom and her grown-up tour, but also because Milan was her boyfriend.

Back then, we girls had very specific ideas about what a great boy should look like. He wasn't allowed to walk around in baggy trousers, but had to wear tight jeans. We thought boys with trainers were stupid. They had to wear some kind of fashionable shoes, preferably high-heeled boots with ornaments. We thought the boys who flicked paper balls around in class or threw apple scraps were stupid. They were the same ones who drank milk in the courtyard at break time and pranced around with a football. The boys who disappeared into the smokers' corner at break time were strong. And they had to be able to drink beer. I still remember how impressed I was when Kessi told me that Milan had a huge head. I kept thinking how I could become like that, that a boy like Milan would chat me up and maybe go with me. Or, and that was really the same thing, that Kessi would accept me. I already found her nickname Kessi incredibly powerful. I wanted to make it so that I also got a strong nickname.

I said to myself, what do you care about the teachers you see for a lesson? Why should they like you. The important thing is that the people you're always with accept you. I then did pretty badly with the teachers. I also had no personal relationship with them at all. Most of them didn't seem to care anyway. They had no real authority and were just bullies. They always got the full works from me. Soon I could turn the whole class upside down and throw a lesson. That brought me recognition, of course.

I scraped together all the money I could to buy cigarettes and go to the smokers' corner. Kessi went to the smokers' corner every break. And when I started going to the smokers' corner, I noticed that Kessi accepted me more and more.

We now talked to each other even after school. She finally invited me to her house and we drank beer together until my head felt pretty funny. We talked about our home. Kessi had had a very similar experience to mine. Actually, she came from an even bigger shit.

Kessi was illegitimate. Her mother changed boyfriends more often. And of course the men didn't accept Kessi. She had just had a bad time with one of her mother's

freaky boyfriends. He had also been fighting, and one day he had smashed up the whole flat and finally thrown the television out of the window. Only Kessi's mother was different from mine. She also tried to be very strict, unlike my mother. Kessi had to be home before eight almost every evening.

I then made it at school, that is, I managed to get full recognition from my classmates. It was a hard, constant struggle. There was hardly any time for studying. The day of my triumph was when I was allowed to sit next to Kessi. I learned from Kessi how to play truant. When she didn't feel like it, she simply stayed away for a few hours to meet Milan or to do something else she enjoyed. At first I was afraid of it. But then I quickly realised that it almost never came out when one skipped individual lessons. Only in the first lesson was it recorded who was absent. In the following lessons, the teachers had far too many students to keep track of who was there and who was not. Many probably didn't care either. Kessi already let boys kiss and caress her during this time. And she already went to the "Haus der Mitte". It was a youth centre of the Protestant church with a kind of disco in the basement, the "Club". You were only allowed to go to the club when you were 14. But you couldn't tell that Kessi was only 13.

I begged until my mother bought me a brassiere. I didn't need one yet. But it made my chest bigger. I also started to put on make-up. And then Kessi took me to the cellar, which opened at five in the afternoon.

The first thing I really saw in the basement was a boy from our school. He was in grade 9 and by now I thought he was the strongest guy at our school. Even stronger than Milan. He was better looking. Above all, he seemed incredibly self-confident. In the middle house he moved like a star. You could tell he felt superior to everyone else. His name was Piet. Piet belonged to a group that always stood or sat apart. It certainly seemed as if they didn't belong to the other teenagers hanging around. The whole group was insanely strong. All the boys looked great. They wore tight jeans, boots with incredibly high soles and

embroidered denim jackets or fantasy jackets made of carpets and other beautiful fabrics.

Kessi knew the boys and introduced me to them. I was excited and thought it was great that Kessi could introduce me to these boys. Because everyone else in the middle house was in awe of this clique. We were even allowed to sit with them. When I came to the basement the next evening, the clique had brought a huge water pipe. At first I didn't know what it was. Kessi explained to me that they smoked hashish and told me I could sit down. I didn't have much of an idea what hashish was. I only knew that it was a narcotic and tremendously forbidden. They lit the stuff and let the hose go around. Everyone pulled on the hose. Kessi too. I refused. I didn't really want to refuse. I wanted to belong to the gang. But I just couldn't bring myself to smoke dope. I was really afraid of that.

I felt very insecure. I would have liked to disappear into thin air. But I couldn't even leave the table, because then it would have looked like I was breaking up with the clique because they were smoking hashish. I then told them that I was in the mood for beer. I collected empty bottles that were lying around everywhere. For four empty bottles you got 80 pfennigs or a full bottle of beer. I got drunk for the first time in my life while the others were sucking on the water pipe. They talked about music. Music I didn't know much about yet. I liked listening to Sweet. I was into all the teeny bopper groups. So I couldn't have a say in it anyway, and it was good that I was drunk and didn't get such insane feelings of inferiority.

I quickly got to know what kind of music they liked and was immediately into their music. David Bowie and so on. For me, the boys were stars in their own right. From behind, they all looked like David Bowie, even though they were only around 16.

The people in the clique were superior in a way that was completely new to me. They weren't loud, they didn't fight, they didn't show off. They were very quiet. They seemed to have their superiority simply from themselves. They were also

very cool with each other. There were never any fights. And every clique member was greeted with a kiss on the mouth when he arrived. The boys set the tone, but the girls were accepted. At least there were no stupid fights between boys and girls.

Then I skipped school again with Kessi. The last two hours. Kessi had arranged to meet Milan at the Wutzkyallee underground station. So we loitered around the station, waited for Milan and kept an eye out for teachers who might turn up at that time.

Kessi was just lighting a cigarette when I saw Piet and his friend Kathi, also a guy from the clique. It was a moment I had often dreamt of. I had always wanted to meet Piet or someone else from the clique during the day. And then I wanted to ask if he would come home with me. I certainly didn't want anything from the boy. Boys as men didn't really interest me at all. I was only 12 and hadn't even had my period yet. What I wanted was to be able to tell people that Piet was at my house. Then the others would have thought I was going with him, or else that I was really thick in this cool clique.

So there were Piet and Kathi. There was no one in our flat at the time, because my mother and her boyfriend were working during the day. So I said to Kessi: "Let's go to the boys and chat a bit." My heart was pounding. But after a few minutes I asked Piet really confidently: "Don't you want to come to my place? There's no one there. And my mum's boyfriend has some really cool records, Led Zeppelin, David Bowie, Ten Years After, Deep Purple and the album from the Woodstock Festival."

I had already learned a lot. Not only did I know the music they liked, I had also learned their language. It was different, like everything with them. I had concentrated entirely on the new expressions I heard from them. That was more important to me than English vocabulary or mathematics formulas.

Piet and Kathi were immediately on board. I was very happy. I was quite self-confident. At home I said, "Guys, shit, but I don't have anything to drink." So we

threw all our pennies together and I went off with Kathi. We went to the supermarket. Beer was too expensive. You needed a few marks to get a bit turned on. We bought a litre bottle of red wine for 1.98 marks. They called it bum wine. So we finished the bottle and chatted. It was mostly about the police. Piet said he had to watch out like hell for the cops because of the dope. They called hashish dope, it came from the English language. They scolded the cops and said that this was a cop state.

For me, all this was incredibly new. Until then, I had only known caretakers as authority figures who you had to hate because they were always breathing down your neck when you were having fun. Policemen were still an unassailable authority for me. Now I learned that the caretaker world of Gropiusstadt was a cop world. That cops were much more dangerous than caretakers. What Piet and Kathi said was the pure and final truth for me anyway.

When the wine ran out, Piet said he still had some dope at home. There was great rejoicing among the others. Piet went out over the balcony. We now lived on the ground floor and I usually went out over the balcony. I thought that was great after all those years on the eleventh floor.

Piet came back with a plate almost as big as a hand, divided into gram pieces for 10 marks. He took out a shillum. This is a wooden tube, about 20 centimetres long. He stuffed tobacco in the top first, so you didn't have to smoke all the way down to the wood. Then he mixed tobacco and hash and put the mixture on top. To smoke, you have to bend the head back and hold the pipe as vertically upwards as possible so that no embers fall out.

I watched carefully how the others did it. I realised that now that I had Piet and Kathi at my place, I couldn't say no. So I said very cool: "Today I'm also up for dope." And I pretended it was my umpteenth shillum.

We had lowered the blinds. There were thick clouds of smoke in the light that was still coming through the blinds. I had put on a David Bowie record and was pulling on the shillum, holding the smoke in my lungs until I had a coughing fit.

Everyone got really quiet. Everyone was kind of dozing off and listening to the music.

I waited for something to happen to me. I thought, now that you've taken drugs, something insanely new must be happening to you. But I didn't really notice anything. I just felt a bit dizzy. But that was actually from the wine. I didn't know yet that most people don't consciously feel anything the first time they smoke hashish. So you really need a bit of practice before you consciously experience the feeling that hashish gives you. Alcohol has much more of an impact.

I saw Piet and Kessi, who were sitting on the sofa, move closer together. Piet stroked Kessi's arms. After a while, the two of them got up, went into my nursery and closed the door.

I was now alone with Kathi. He sat down with me on the back of the chair and put an arm over my shoulders. I immediately found Kathi even better than Piet. I was quite happy that Kathi came to me and showed that he was interested in me. I was always afraid that the boys would look at my 12 years and dismiss me as a little kid.

Kathi began to caress me. Then I didn't know whether I should like it or not. I was getting insanely hot. I think with fear. I sat there as if made of stone and tried to say something about the record that was playing. When Kathi grabbed my bosom, or what was to become real bosom, I got up and went to the record player and fiddled around endlessly.

Then Piet and Kessi came out of my room again. They looked very strange. Distraught and somehow sad. Kessi was all red in the face. They didn't look at each other at all. They didn't say a word either. I felt that Kessi had had a very bad experience. That it certainly hadn't done her any good. That it must have been very unsatisfying for both of them.

Piet finally asked me if I would also come to the Haus der Mitte in the evening. That made me happy again. I had achieved an incredible amount. It had come

about just as I had dreamed. That I invited Piet and Kathi to my house and then really belonged to the clique.

Piet and Kessi went outside via the balcony. Kathi was still standing around in the room. I got something like fear again. I didn't want to stay alone with Kathi. I told him straight out that I had to tidy up now and then do schoolwork. I suddenly didn't care what he thought. He left too. I lay down in my room, looked at the ceiling and tried to get some perspective. Kathi looked really good, but somehow I didn't like him anymore. After an hour and a half, the doorbell rang. I saw Kathi through the peephole in the front door. I didn't open the door and tiptoed back to my room. I was really afraid of being alone with this guy. At that moment he really pissed me off and I myself was somehow ashamed. I didn't know why. Whether it was because of the dope or because of Kathi. But nothing had really happened.

I became quite sad. Now that I had been accepted into the clique, I thought that I didn't really belong to them. I was too young for things with boys. I knew now exactly that I wouldn't be able to do that. And what they said about the police and the state and so on was very foreign to me and it wasn't really anything that concerned me directly.

Nevertheless, I was already at the Haus der Mitte at five o'clock. We didn't go to the club, but to the cinema. I wanted to sit between Kessi and someone I didn't know, but Kathi pushed her way in. When the film was on, he started stroking me again. At some point he went between my legs with his hand. I didn't resist. I was really paralysed. I was terrified of something. Once I wanted to run out. Then I thought again: "Christiane, this is the price you pay for being in this clique now." I let it all wash over me and said nothing. I had a lot of respect for this guy. Only when he said I should caress him too, and then when he tried to pull my hand towards him, I clasped my hands together in my lap.

I was incredibly happy when the film was over. I immediately left Kathi and went to Kessi. I told her everything and said that I didn't want to know anything more

about Kathi. Kessi must have told him, because a little later it came out that she had a huge crush on Kathi. She started crying in the club because Kathi didn't pay any more attention to her than the other girls. She told me how smitten she was and that she always felt like crying when Kathi was around.

Despite the thing with Kathi, I now belonged to the clique. I was the little one for the others. But I belonged. None of the boys tried to touch me. The word must have got around and it was fully accepted that I still felt too young to fool around. That was also different from the alcoholics. We called the young people who got turned on with beer and schnapps alcoholics. Girls who were shy were treated very brutally. These girls were made fun of, they were insulted and were undercooked. With us there was no brutality at all. We accepted each other the way we were. We were all somehow the same or on the same trip. We got along without much chatter. No one in the clique ever became loud or foul-mouthed. It was none of our business what the others said. We felt exalted.

Except for Piet, Kessi and me, everyone was already going to work. It was similar for all of them. They stank at home and at work. Unlike the alcoholics, who carried their stress around with them in the club and were aggressive, the guys in our clique could totally switch off. They threw on their cool clothes after work, smoked dope, listened to cool music and it was total peace. We forgot about all the shit we had to go through outside the rest of the day.

I did not yet feel the same as the others. I thought I was still too young for that. But the others were my role models. I wanted to be like them or become like them. I wanted to learn from them because I thought they knew how to live cool and not let all the assholes and all the shit get to me. I didn't let my parents and teachers tell me anything anymore anyway. For me, the clique was now everything that was important in my life - except my animals.

The fact that I was so totally into this clique also had its reasons at home. By then it had become unbearable. The most unbearable thing was that Klaus, my mother's boyfriend, was a real animal hater. At least that's what I believed at the

time. It started with Klaus constantly babbling that it wouldn't work with all the animals in such a small flat. Then he forbade my new Great Dane, which I got from my father, to lie in the living room.

I was already freaking out then. Our dogs had always been part of the family. They had been treated like all the other family members. And now this guy came and said the Great Dane wasn't allowed in the living room. But it got even more colourful. He also wanted to forbid me to let the dog sleep next to my bed. He wanted me to build a hutch for the Great Dane in my tiny room. Of course I didn't do that.

Then Klaus made his final appearance. He declared that the animals had to leave the house. My mother still stood by him and said I was no longer taking care of the animals. I thought that was the last thing. Of course I was often not at home in the evenings and one of them had to take the dog out again. But otherwise, I said, I took care of the dog and the other animals every free minute.

No threatening, no screaming and no crying helped me. My dog was given away. He went to a woman who I thought was okay, who really liked him. But the woman soon got cancer and had to give the dog away. I heard he went to a pub. He was an insanely sensitive animal who went crazy at every noise. I knew my dog would break in a pub. I blamed Klaus and my mother. I didn't want to have anything more to do with people who were so hostile to animals.

That was all during the time when I started going to the House of the Middle and smoked hashish for the first time. I had two cats left. But they didn't need me during the day. At night they slept in my bed. After the dog left, there was no reason for me to be at home any more. I no longer had a job there. I also didn't like to go for walks alone any more. I just waited for it to be five o'clock and for the club at the Haus der Mitte to open. Sometimes I spent the afternoons with Kessi and others from the clique.

I smoked every night. Those who had money in the clique gave some to the others. I also didn't find anything wrong with smoking hashish any more. We did

it quite openly in the Haus der Mitte. The social workers from the church who looked after the club would occasionally talk to us when we smoked. There were different types. But most of them admitted straight away that they had also smoked. They came from the university, from the student movement, and smoking hashish was something quite normal there. And these guys just told us not to overdo it and not to use it as a means of escape and stuff like that. Above all, we shouldn't switch to hard drugs.

It went in one ear and out the other. The guys also talked a lot when they admitted that they smoked. One of us once said to a young guy, "You think it's OK for students to smoke pot. They've got the picture. But when apprentices or workers smoke pot, that's dangerous. We don't have arguments like that." The guy didn't know what to say. He had a really bad conscience.