

IN BETWEEN

Synopsis of “Dazwischengefunkt”

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*There's no such thing as coincidence.
Everything has a higher, divine purpose,
even though it is expressed
in the low plains of humanity.*

It's a sunny and beautiful morning in Zürich, Switzerland. Robert Mann, a 37-year old single guy, is sitting in a rented apartment of a private hotel in the city centre. His mind is troubled and darkened. It seems that he didn't sleep at all in the night before. On his lap lies the newest edition of the newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. He just read it and, apparently, came across news that affects him deeply. He grabs the telephone. The reader finds out that he's supposed to ring up an assistant lawyer that was assigned to him by a Zürich court. But Mr. Mann hesitates to make the call. He has to sort out his thoughts at first.

He figures that he is guilty... and that he will have to appear before a Zürich court, already for the second time in his life. Mr. Mann doesn't delve into the reasons of his guilt, or of the writ of summons by the Zürich court, though. The reader just gets to know that he is guilty of something, and that Mr. Mann is worried about the court trial that lies ahead.

In his thoughts Mr. Mann begins to review his past: He used to be an amateur radio operator already since age 12. In fact, operating the radio was, and still is, his passion. He even refers to radioing as a calling. In his youth he took part in courses to operate radios, and got in touch with people around the world via an amateur station that he built and maintained at his parents' home.

Once upon a time he even managed to establish radio contact with a Canadian girl – he doesn't recall her name, however. But he remembers that a sort of teenager love developed between them, that is, they were both “on the same wavelength”. They even planned to operate a radio station together in Canada. The girl had already a provisional station working somewhere close to Quebec. Yet their common plans never came true, as the connection between the two of them suddenly broke some day ... and he never succeeded to reach her again – there was a total “radio silence”.

Now the reader, still following and reading up on the trains of thoughts of Mr. Mann, gets to know that, of course, he moved on with his life after the mysterious breakdown of this “love in the air” -connection. As a hobby, Mr. Mann began to listen in to the truckers' radio traffic in Europe, and, realising that they had logistical problems, developed a radio-operated navigation system. The system was widely used until GPS [Global Positioning System] via satellites came into being and replaced his invention...

However, with the money of the navigation system he had invented, Mr. Mann studied telecommunication engineering and aviation. The reader might figure at that point that he actually worked in that area for quite a while. But nowadays Mr. Mann is employed at Zürich

airport in a mobile phone shop. Maybe the reason that he's presently working in a mobile phone shop has something to do with his first criminal conviction? The reader can only guess at that point of the short story...

Mr. Mann goes on thinking about his past. He reasons that his passion for radio operating caused him to be in this current troubled situation. But then he mentions a co-pilot named Melanie Weibel, and he blames her for the things he faces at this particular time in his life. Or maybe not, he can't blame her, he concludes: It's all his own fault. Now he takes the newspaper from his lap and begins to read an article. He must have read it already several times: the reader reads the article along with Mr. Mann – it's printed in full length in the short story.

What does the article say? It states that Mr. Mann, a former air traffic controller stationed at the main tower of Zürich airport, who was recently dismissed from service due to negligence of duty had rescued a plane from crashing. How come? The reader finds out from the newspaper article that Mr. Mann had secretly listened in to the air traffic of planes starting and landing at Zürich airport – from his office in the mobile phone shop, with the help of a self-built radio device. From his office he also had a fairly good view over the runway.

The article reports that a few days ago [at that particular day it was very foggy in Zürich and the vision on the airfield was really bad] Mr. Mann spotted a part of a plane on the runway that had just landed. Meanwhile another plane was about to land. Yet no-one in the control tower seemed to realise the danger... Thus in the urgency of the moment Mr. Mann warned the pilots by his radio about the dangerous part on the runway and made it possible for the approaching plane to quickly touch-and-go.

In the article Mr. Mann is praised for his "coming in between". But the article also mentions his past and reveals that, inevitably, he will face a court trial for illegally operating a radio station and tapping the air traffic at Zürich airport. Mr. Mann is desperate. The reader gets to know that, actually, he is hiding in the rented flat from the media that tries to track him down in order to interview him. He doesn't want to appear as a hero. In fact, he's quite a tragicomic figure, and, pondering on his situation, he asks himself whether there is not such a thing as "poetic justice"...

At that very moment the phone of Mr. Mann's rented apartment rings. He takes the call. At the other end is Peter Bleibtreu, his assistant lawyer, who decided to reach him in order to go through the preparations for a hearing that will be arranged at the court where Mr. Mann has to face the trial. Mr. Bleibtreu wants to support Mr. Mann in his case. He also mentions that a woman from Canada called Juliette Lefèvre would like to help out. Being on a work trip to Europe, Geneva, she had read in the Swiss press about the rescued plane and Mr. Mann's role in the rescue.

Eventually Mr. Bleibtreu reveals that Ms. Lefèvre is a respected attorney and expert in telecommunication law. Of course, Ms. Lefèvre is the woman that Mr. Mann once knew in his youth as the girl in Quebec. It's also revealed that Ms. Lefèvre, after the Canadian officials had shut down her own provisional radio station, became a lawyer in telecommunication law. On the phone Mr. Mann agrees to meet Mr. Bleibtreu and Ms. Lefèvre – the story ends here. Mr. Mann reasons that the days and nights ahead will be much lighter than the past ones...