

DEATH IN SUMMER



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*But worst: to be denied
a death in summer,
when all is bright,
the earth soft beneath the spade.*
Gottfried Benn



Chapter 1

The man stepped onto the green and picked up the little white ball; he had never played golf in his life.

He wore rimless glasses and thin latex gloves, as is the custom for police officers working in forensics. It was the first time he had ever held a golf ball. He marked its position with a little wooden stick and placed the ball in a clear plastic bag.

It was the first find of the afternoon, except, of course, for the body lying 150 metres away. Inspector Eschenbach had received the call about the dead golfer just after his lunch break. He had been sitting in front of the mountain of files he had been putting off for days. Next to him sat the cup of espresso he had bought from the Starbucks café that had just opened.

‘Male. Mid-fifties. Shot dead at the fifteenth hole,’ said Elisabeth Kobler, police chief for the canton of Zurich, when she called to brief him. ‘Drive over and take a look at the crime scene. I’ve come to see Councillor Sacher about this brawl on Limmatplatz. Might be along later.’

‘All right,’ he grumbled. ‘I’ll take care of it.’

The espresso was awful, he thought – much too sweet, and the oversized Styrofoam cup only made matters worse.

‘And remember, Eschenbach. That club’s a fancy place. Full of poshos. Make sure you wear a tie . . . and keep it *on the DL*.’

‘Of course.’

‘OK, see you later.’

‘Later,’ he mumbled and hung up.

‘On the DL’ had become Kobler’s phrase of choice in recent weeks. After the press had put pressure on Kobler due to some suspected misconduct in the police force, it was imperative that everything remain ‘on the DL’.

It would be difficult, he thought, to keep the news that a golfer had been murdered at a swanky golf club on Lake Zurich ‘on the DL’. And he hated Americanisms.

He opened the cupboard and took out an orange Hermès tie – a gift from his daughter for his fiftieth the month before. He put it on. ‘Poshos,’ he thought. He found he had tied it too long, so that it dangled over his waistband; he loosened the knot and tried again. He looked at his reflection in the shaving mirror on the cabinet door and wondered whether things would change now he was fifty. Would life be grimmer, older, or greyer from now on? Perhaps it would be all three.

When he had taken up the role as chief of the Criminal Investigation Department, aged thirty-eight, Eschenbach had been the youngest chief in the history of the Zurich CID. In the intervening years, his dark-brown hair had grown lighter, he thought, at least at the edges. He had hardly any grey hair. He would have preferred it the other way around. He pulled a face in the mirror, then shut the cabinet door.

He would not need his gun – that was something. It occurred to him that he had left it with the gunsmith and should give him a call. He hated the thing; he preferred thinking rather than shooting any day. Perhaps it was because he could control one better than the other.



He took his jacket off the chair, slipped it on and left his office. On the way, he met Claudio Jagmetti, the trainee from the police academy who had been assigned to him for the summer. He asked him to type up the corrected report on his desk. Then he took the stairs down to the underground garage and got into his car.

Eschenbach crossed Bellevue and headed towards Bürkliplatz with Lake Zurich on his left. The white sails of the boats reflected the sunlight and behind them stood the Alps: majestic, topped with a permanent dusting of snow. Against the deep blue of the summer sky, they painted a picture in blue and white. Blue and white, he thought, the colours of Zurich.

It was early July, and for weeks Zurich had been sweating in temperatures more commonly found in the southern Alps. He loosened his tie, then took it off altogether. Beads of perspiration were forming on his brow. At the lights, he leant over and pulled his Brissagos out of his jacket on the back seat. Eschenbach loved the knobbly cigarillos from Ticino, the Italian speaking part of Switzerland. They helped him think. He lit one and thought of Corina. She and Kathrin had gone to The Engandine Valley to stay at his in-laws' apartment. They had left three days earlier than expected – because of the heat, the summer holidays had started early. All because of a measly thirty-eight degrees in the shade. Wimps, he thought. All of them.

Eschenbach had promised to drive up at the weekend and visit them.

There was little traffic on the road along the lake. Eschenbach made good time and reached the gates to the golf club in twenty minutes. Plane trees lined the well-tended gravel path that led



up to the clubhouse. Eschenbach parked his Volvo next to two dark-blue luxury cars, got out and noticed that his light-blue shirt was clinging to his back, sodden with perspiration.

Across from him, two elderly women in cream plaid outfits were getting into a golf buggy. Burberry. He knew the brand. His daughter had a similar blouse, of which she was immensely proud. It had been a present from Corina. Plaid was *mega*, or so he had been informed, *totally sick*. Eschenbach found the pattern ridiculous, somehow old fashioned, and he vaguely remembered his grandmother wearing something similar.

He swept away the cigarillo ash on his beige trousers. The ladies in plaid were eyeing him with suspicion. He greeted them cheerily and – unfazed by the snootiness he had encountered the minute he stepped out of the car – walked up the steps to the clubhouse. He stuck his half-smoked Brissago in the brass pot near the entrance.

‘Are you a member?’ asked the woman at reception in a hushed tone.

‘Inspector Eschenbach,’ he said. Then, more quietly: ‘Zurich CID.’

The young woman shrank back, horrified, but composed herself at once. Eschenbach leant over the smooth, varnished counter and whispered, ‘I’m here about the dead golfer.’

‘Yes, I know.’ The woman’s nasal tone transformed into a conspiratorial whisper. ‘It’s simply awful. I’ll call Mr Aebischer. He’s the manager.’

‘Thanks. I’ll wait outside.’

Eschenbach recovered his cold Brissago from the brass container, lit it and stepped out into the sunshine. It was warm and summery outside, but he felt a chill. Was it the beginning



of summer flu? Or some sense of rising unease? The golf bags standing in front of the clubhouse looked like silent guard dogs.

He waited.

The hedges were neatly trimmed, and footpaths stretched across the green with utmost precision. The grass was a uniform green. It gave Eschenbach the impression of a shaggy bear primped and clipped like a poodle.

He took a drag on his cigarillo.

‘Inspector?’ A scrawny man in a blue blazer hurried towards Eschenbach. He introduced himself as the manager of the golf club. In a series of convoluted sentences, he described what had happened. The first thing that Eschenbach was able to make out was that somewhere on the green, in between two holes, lay a dead man.

Eschenbach listened to his wild theories about stray bullets, the army, and young marksmen mixed with fears about the possible damage to the image of the club and to golf worldwide.

It bored him. He was craving a cold beer.

‘Can I get something to drink?’

Interrupted mid-flow, the scrawny man in the blazer looked as if he had just been slapped in the face.

‘I’ll get you a glass of water and then we can drive to the fifteenth hole, where the body is. Your colleagues have been at work for over an hour reconstructing the crime scene.’ His last sentence seemed to bear a taunting undertone.

It was just before half nine when Eschenbach concluded his investigations on the golf course. He felt tired and drained.





His people had cordoned off the golf course in time to stop the minibus from Tele Zurich, which arrived with two camera crews. He could understand why the media were so annoyed by this. Club members' cars were stopped as they made their way home through the chaos, cameras clicked at tinted windows.

'If you don't get out of the way, I'll run you down!' snarled an old, balding man with a bright red face through the gap in the window of his Jaguar. Further back, a Mercedes S-Class sounded its horn.

Cows grazed peacefully behind the electric fence, undisturbed by the spectacle.

The terrace of the club restaurant, which offered a wonderful view of Lake Zurich and the Glarus Alps, was still a hive of activity. Eschenbach sat down at a free table and ordered a beer.

A few of the guests eyed him furtively. Others were friendly, offering a greeting or even a wave. They had been questioned about the incident and their names had been recorded. They seemed to be relieved that the ordeal was over.

This was the type of place where the sensationalism that often arose unchecked in such situations, hampering police investigations in the process, was discreetly concealed beneath the guise of genteel indifference. The guests whispered quietly to one another at their tables. They prophesied the end of golf as they knew it and speculated about the perpetrator and possible motives. The club management were serving delicious appetisers and champagne in delicate glasses. They seemed to want to make up for the events of the afternoon and help their guests to relax.





Eschenbach felt out of place. Everyone who visited the club was running from something. From boredom, stress or depression. Sadness. Overwork. Joylessness. Lovelessness. Anaemia. Low blood sugar. Cold hearts. Heart attacks. They were exiles from a tragic continent, where the superficial was prized above all else.

Why would someone murder Philipp Bettlach? Eschenbach stared at the lake and wished the whole thing was over and done with already. Drawing to a close, like the day itself. He knew that, in reality, it was just the beginning. There would be the interrogations at HQ, the press to deal with, and the lies from people making their false confessions.

He paid for his beer and followed the gravel path back to his car, all the while looking out at the lake, lost in thought. It would be a clear summer night.

Eschenbach could quite clearly make out the navigation lights of the ships coming in to dock. Red for port, green for starboard. He knew them well. Now and then, when work allowed, he would take his friend's old fishing boat out onto the lake. It had little to do with fishing; it was simply an excuse to do nothing at all. He found the nylon wire too fiddly and he couldn't make head or tail of bait, spoon lures and flies. He liked nothing more than to read the paper and go for a swim. Sometimes he simply lay on deck, letting himself be rocked by the waves, looking up into the sky where the clouds chased after one another.

On the journey back to Zurich, his mind replayed the few hours he had spent at the golf course. He had a dead golfer, who, according to details provided by the club management, was fifty-six years of age, vice president of a Swiss bank, and well



liked by all. He was happy, divorced, had no children and no enemies. Why would someone have wanted to shoot him? And why there? Why then?

The shot must have been fired from a considerable distance, otherwise some trace of the killer would already have been found. Eschenbach suspected he had used a long range rifle.

The people from forensics would resume their search the next morning, in better light. They would turn over every blade of grass as far as the Alps if they had to.

Eschenbach pondered the case. The golf course was surrounded by a seemingly endless chain of hills – and like in a gigantic haystack, the needle was nowhere to be found.

Feeling discouraged he drew on his Brissago and blew the smoke through the open window in short puffs, out into the balmy summer night.

If he had no clue as to the distance from which the shooter had struck, he must at least try to form a clearer idea about the direction from which the bullet had come. He had to find out at what angle the bullet had entered the victim's head. He also had to ascertain how the golfer had been standing when the bullet hit. What position had Philipp Bettlach's head been in and how had his body been aligned? It's too complicated, thought Eschenbach. It'll be impossible to reconstruct. But he knew he must.

Chapter 2

As Eschenbach made his way towards Bahnhofstrasse at 7.30 the following morning, it was already a warm summer's day. He had yet to put on his jacket, which hung casually over his right shoulder.

The crisis meeting he had just left made him feel positive for the rest of the day. Now the operation was running full steam ahead. He was used to the mad rush that followed a murder. It was like a crackle of electricity that energised the otherwise inert police force and set it blazing with light.

In his light-grey trousers, fresh sky-blue shirt – which he wore without a tie – and his sunglasses, he looked more like an Italian tourist than the head of the CID.

Perhaps this was due simply to the city where he worked. In Florence or Rome he could have passed easily for an inspector, maybe even a bank manager. Here in Zurich, the metropolis of money, bankers wore dark suits, even in summer. They did it more out of the conviction that this was the proper way to dress than vanity.

The coffee bar on St Anna-Gasse had already set up its tables and chairs outside. Eschenbach sat down, stretched his legs and ordered an espresso.

When the inspector climbed the steps to headquarters scarcely an hour later, he had some idea of what might await him.

The officers at the entrance greeted him pleasantly; they stood with their arms wide, attempting to keep the camera crews, photographers and journalists at bay. It was a storm of noise, questions flying everywhere. Eschenbach acknowledged them, unsmiling. 'The press conference is at 9.30,' he shouted. Then he disappeared inside.

On the third floor, chaos reigned. The telephones were ringing constantly, and officers were running with unusual urgency through the open-plan office, which was divided by partition walls. A sketch of the crime scene hung from a large pinboard; coffee-stained paper cups lay scattered throughout.

In the midst of the chaos stood Rosa Mazzoleni. She had keen, brown eyes and a sturdy figure, and had been Eschenbach's secretary for over ten years. A pair of reading glasses dangled from her neck on a gold chain and her short black hair gleamed. Rosa enjoyed the chaos; it reminded her of Naples, her home town, of the traffic and the way people did business south of the Alps.

When the inspector arrived on the third floor, his secretary initially made no move to greet him. She pulled a face and waved her right hand at him, then pointed towards Eschenbach's office. 'She's already in there . . . she just walked straight through. She's been on the phone for over half an hour.'

His office door was ajar and, through the gap, Eschenbach could hear the voice of Elisabeth Kobler.

'But you must understand that we cannot comment on possible suspects so soon after a crime.'

Silence.

'No, we don't. The press conference is at half nine. OK,' she said, and finished abruptly.

Eschenbach opened the door to his office. At once, Kobler took her feet off the desk and made to slip them back into her dark-brown loafers.

‘You can leave your shoes on next time,’ he said, grinning.

‘Bloodthirsty hacks!’ Kobler was annoyed. ‘What do you think you’re doing, Eschenbach? You can’t just leave me hanging here. The phones have been going since half seven. I’ve yet to see a report and you’ve only just got in!’

‘Nothing’s come through yet. We know he was shot, possibly with a long-distance rifle. So, my guess is either a lunatic sniper or a professional marksman.’

‘Like the one in Washington, DC, who shot thirteen people? You’re telling me we’ve got one of those on our hands?’

‘So far, all we’ve got is a body. I assume that’s it for the moment.’

‘And now what do we do?’ asked Elisabeth Kobler, visibly relieved not to have missed any important developments.

‘Dr Salvisberg is examining the body. I think we’ll know more by lunchtime. After that, I’d like to arrange a reconstruction with him and a golf pro.’

‘A golf what?’ Kobler raised her eyebrows.

‘A golf pro, you know . . . a golf instructor.’

‘I don’t play golf.’ She stood up.

‘Me neither,’ he said, passing Kobler her jacket from one of the chairs.

Without another word, she went out into the corridor and down the stairs, where a ravenous crowd of journalists were waiting in the large conference room.

The press conference went better than expected.

Kobler held back and left the talking to Eschenbach, who knew, in his stolid, casual way, how to make a molehill out of a mountain.



‘One last question, then that’s all for today,’ he said, pulling a cigarillo out of his jacket. A smoking ban had been in place at HQ since the first of January; it was obvious he wanted to get going.

‘Are you expecting the killer to strike again?’ The question came from a young female journalist, working for the *Zürcher Tagblatt*. Eschenbach had never seen her before.

‘We are not assuming that for the moment, though of course we can’t know with any certainty.’

There were another two queries along the same lines, then Eschenbach dismissed further questions. He looked at Elisabeth Kobler and they nodded at one another. She took over, thanked everyone for coming and brought the conference to an end.

‘You should have been a lion tamer,’ said Kobler, when they were standing outside in the hallway. She seemed visibly relieved and in good spirits once again. ‘Do you really think he might strike again?’

‘Did I say that?’

‘No, but you were thinking it,’ she added quietly and placed a hand on Eschenbach’s shoulder.

‘I just hope that no one else can read my thoughts. Otherwise we’ll have a serial killer on our hands before we’ve even a scrap of evidence.’

‘Good luck,’ said Kobler as she walked towards the exit, before leaving the building through the revolving doors.

Eschenbach took the stairs to the third floor. Rosa Mazzoleni was so engrossed in her computer screen that she hardly noticed as he scurried past.

He went into his office, closed the door behind him and lit the Brissago that he had held in his hand the whole time.



Smoking in private offices was neither banned nor permitted. The final decision on the matter was taking a while. Two executive members of the government were heavy smokers, so there was nothing to fear for the time being.

Deep in thought, Eschenbach opened the window and blew smoke out into the muggy summer air. He was reluctant to go outside, now that the sun was shining ever more strongly, but he had to get to the golf course. He had no time to lose.

He asked Rosa Mazzoleni to call Pathology and connect him to Dr Salvisberg. He was rarely around at this time of day. In addition to his work with the police, Salvisberg lectured on forensic medicine at the University of Zurich, marked his students' seminar work and wrote reports for the Swiss Tropical Institute, the pharmaceutical industry and God knows who else. 'When you're surrounded by dead people, you have to work hard to stay among the living,' Salvisberg had once explained.

Rosa Mazzoleni got through to Pathology immediately.

'Dr Salvisberg, Eschenbach here – not disturbing you, am I?'

'Never, Eschenbach. Would you believe it, you've caught me in the freezer.' He sniggered quietly.

'Do you play golf?' asked the inspector.

'Goodness, where would I find the energy for that? I cut up bodies all day, and then there's the stress of dealing with these damn students.' Salvisberg sighed. 'My students are currently evaluating my performance as a lecturer . . . Can you imagine . . .?'

Eschenbach laughed.

'This is the latest thing from management – it's an absolute turd of an idea,' he continued. 'They've got shit-for-brains, I'm telling you . . .' He ranted about education policy, both Swiss and European, and griped about the university administration. 'They've got more dead brains up there than I've got in Pathology.'



He finished with a description of the dementia he believed was raging worldwide. He was losing hope, he said: 'Luckily I've still got the reports. At least they pay properly.'

'Then it's not half as bad as you say,' joked Eschenbach.

'What do you mean "not half as bad"? It's ghastly.' And, after a brief pause, 'What were we talking about?'

'Golf,' replied Eschenbach.

'As a cure for dementia?' Salvisberg laughed at the top of his voice. 'I have better things to be doing with my free time.'

'What's better than golf?' asked Eschenbach.

'Fishing!'

'Oh, you're into fishing.' For Eschenbach, anything was more interesting than golf. But he never would have guessed Salvisberg would be into fishing.

'Of course. Fly fishing,' replied Salvisberg, noting the irritation in his colleague's voice. 'Why don't you come along? I've been fishing on the River Sihl for years. It's peaceful and sheltered. And there's not a soul to be seen.'

'Just like Pathology, then – no souls there either.'

Salvisberg sniggered again. 'Exactly. And there's no one to complain about poor treatment.'

'Let's be serious for a moment, Salvisberg. Have you got any ideas on the angle the bullet went in?'

'I can show you approximately where. Not on the victim's head, of course, there's not much left of it.'

'I see.' Eschenbach grimaced. 'Could it be reconstructed on a dummy?'

'Yes, of course. Come by. Bring a mannequin.'

'You may laugh, but that's the plan. I can't come myself though. My assistant, Claudio Jagmetti, will have to do it.'





‘I look forward to it.’

‘And please, Salvisberg, be nice to him. He’s a good boy, fresh out of the police academy, and I’d like him to stay with us for good. There are enough traumatised police officers as it is.’

‘Sure, I’ll send over that report, then. Speak soon . . . and come fishing some time. I’d like that.’

‘Maybe . . . speak soon.’

Eschenbach put the phone down and pressed the button on the intercom to speak to Ms Mazzoleni.

‘Send me Jagmetti, when you see him.’

‘Will do,’ came her crackling reply through the loudspeaker. ‘What was that with Kobler, boss?’

‘All good. I think she managed to control herself.’

‘It’s horrible, what the papers have been saying about her recently,’ her voice crackled again.

Eschenbach didn’t respond. He took a brief look through the signature folder and signed it as required. Then he stood up, picked up his jacket and left the room.

As Eschenbach walked along the corridor towards the stairs, he came across Claudio Jagmetti.

‘Sorry, boss. I was at the dentist.’

‘Oh, I completely forgot,’ said the inspector. ‘Come with me . . . and for God’s sake, stop calling me “boss”.’

Without exchanging another word, they walked side by side to the exit. The summer heat hit them as they stepped out of the cool, air-conditioned foyer.

The café opposite was serving lunch to its first customers who had found themselves a comfy spot in the garden, amid the terracotta pots.





The two police officers crossed the street and found seats at a small green bistro table. Eschenbach explained that he wanted to reconstruct the golfer's murder at the golf course. 'We'll need a life-size dummy with a movable head.'

Jagmetti eyed the inspector disbelievingly.

'Get a dummy, ideally from a department store, and then take it to Salvisberg in Pathology. He'll know you're coming.'

'Will do,' said the young police cadet, noting everything down neatly in a small square notebook.

'Then drive over to the golf course – it's called Lake Zurich Golf Club – and arrange for a golf pro to join us.'

Jagmetti nodded.

'Do you know what a golf pro is?' asked Eschenbach.

'Someone who knows how to play golf?' replied Jagmetti, as if he didn't understand the question.

'Exactly, a golf teacher,' explained Eschenbach. 'We'll need him from three o'clock.'

'OK, consider it done,' said Jagmetti, proud to be involved in such an important case.

Eschenbach placed the money for the drinks on the table. They stood up, left the café and made for the exclusive shopping avenue Bahnhofstrasse, before going their separate ways.

The inspector was curious to see how Jagmetti would set about his vaguely formulated task. As he walked, he began to wonder whether he had explained himself properly. He was surprised that the young police officer hadn't asked any questions or expressed any concerns. It wasn't in keeping with his past experience of trainees.



Chapter 3

The offices of Zurich Commercial Bank were on Rennweg, one of the most beautiful streets in Zurich. The entrance was flanked by sandstone columns on either side and a solid glass door offered a glimpse into the main hall.

In place of a doorknob, there was a bronze lion's head. Into the lion's den, thought Eschenbach, as he gripped the bronze head and went to enter. Yet the door opened of its own accord, as if pulled by a ghostly hand, and he was greeted by a draught of pleasantly cool air.

The dark brown of the polished oak floor and the light reflecting softly on the white walls gave the room a simple elegance.

To his right stood a Giacometti statue on a plinth, almost two metres high. Despite its slender silhouette, the bronze sculpture seemed to invade the whole space.

A plump blond woman – a charming contrast to the Giacometti figure – sat smiling behind the reception desk.

A metallic clicking behind him made Eschenbach jump – an old reflex – and he turned around. He relaxed when he saw that it was just the door closing after him.

‘Can I help you, Mr . . .’

Eschenbach turned again and walked over to the woman, who was still smiling.

‘Eschenbach, Zurich CID,’ he said, showing her his badge. ‘Dr Bettlach is expecting me.’

‘Ah.’ She picked up the telephone and dialled an internal number. She spoke briefly to the person at the other end of the line and replaced the receiver.

‘Come with me, Inspector.’ She stood up and accompanied him the few steps to the lift, before holding a magnetic card up to a small Perspex plaque. Then she pressed the button for the top floor.

Dr Johannes Bettlach was a large, gaunt-looking man. His grey hair, combed severely back, shone almost white in the sunlight and was longer than one might expect for a bank manager. Beneath his strong brow sat strikingly pale eyes, ensconced in two dark sockets. His features were stern, but not unfriendly.

He walked slowly across the room towards Eschenbach.

On the walls hung large-scale contemporary art pieces and behind the desk a bookcase, packed with books, reaching as high as the stucco ceiling. The room was not what Eschenbach had expected of a Swiss bank: the books, the dark wood floor, the Buddha sitting enthroned upon a cigar box, propping up a stack of books, the bronze ballet dancer hovering in a seemingly weightless pose next to the telephone.

The inspector was familiar with the banks along Bahnhofstrasse: the marble halls with barriers of bullet-proof glass, and the plush carpets in grey or anthracite covering the directors’ floors, creating an air of detached elegance. He knew them from some of his previous investigations. But this place was different.

Dr Bettlach took Eschenbach's hand in his and gave it a light squeeze. His hand was warm and, despite the sudden intimacy of the gesture and his lack of familiarity with the person performing it, Eschenbach didn't find it unpleasant.

He was reminded of his passing out ceremony at the Church of St Francis when he became a young lieutenant in the Swiss Army. His commander, Colonel Nydegger, had looked deep into his eyes as he shook his hand.

It had been a moment of celebration, a moment that lived on inside him long after the fact.

With that handshake *le motto* had found its way into the moral values of the young officer, like a spark of good middle class ethics. It came back to him again now, in this curious situation in Dr Bettlach's office.

The two men stood looking at one another for a short while. Neither spoke until Dr Bettlach's quiet, cautious voice broke the silence.

'Shall we sit?'

Dr Bettlach indicated a leather armchair. Eschenbach promptly sat down and felt the black leather receive him as a great sense of weariness descended. He closed his eyes for a moment, then opened them again. 'I couldn't reach you yesterday. It's . . . I wanted to inform you in person.'

'I know he was shot . . . at the golf course.' Dr Bettlach looked at Eschenbach with his pale eyes. His gaze wandered to the window, then outside, before becoming lost somewhere amid the roofs and chimneys opposite.

The ornamental geraniums hanging from the balconies' wrought iron bars in grey slate boxes, their vermillion petals



dancing in the sunlight, did nothing to counter the sadness in his eyes.

‘Yes, that’s what happened,’ said Eschenbach slowly.

‘Do you know who did it?’

‘No. The investigation is under way. We’re . . . we still don’t know.’

‘Philipp was my brother, my younger brother.’ Dr Bettlach’s gaze, which had returned to the rooftop gardens as he spoke, drifted again. ‘It is so sad, it’s all so immensely sad,’ he continued. This time, his eyes remained fixed outside and his thoughts seemed far away, lost amid the geraniums, the ivy and the horizon, between the midday sun of July and the dark shadows of grief.

‘Who could have wanted to kill your brother?’ Eschenbach slid forward, as if to shake off the melancholy that seemed to have wrapped itself around every inch of the room like black seaweed.

‘I don’t know, Inspector. I don’t know.’

Eschenbach loosened his collar, undid his top button and took a deep breath. Had he put on weight? His voice was hoarse. He cleared his throat. ‘Why don’t you tell me about him? What sort of person was your brother? What was he like? Tell me about his friends, his wife, his family, relationships. Everything.’

Dr Bettlach noticed Eschenbach’s attempt to throw off the air of gloom and he began, slowly, hesitant at first, then with increasing fluency, to talk about his brother.

Eschenbach interrupted him briefly to ask if he could use his Dictaphone, to which Bettlach agreed with an absent-minded





nod. The inspector placed the recorder on the table to ensure that his interviewee could see it.

As Dr Bettlach spoke about his brother, describing his personality and his quirks, he switched – at first occasionally, then with increasing frequency – between a sombre past tense and a more cheerful present. ‘Was’ became ‘is’, ‘had’ became ‘has’, ‘could’ became ‘can’ until at last it seemed the dead man was alive again.

Bettlach spoke in a calm, sober tone. He seemed to select each word carefully, gave every pause its full weight. When his secretary came to give him two notes and inform him that he needed to return some calls, he didn’t seem remotely interested. And later, when they were served espresso and amaretti, he seemed hardly to notice.

Eschenbach had just ejected the cassette from the Dictaphone and went to insert a new one, but realised that he hadn’t brought a second cassette with him. Instead he turned the device off.

‘Philipp was bright, quick-thinking, he had a sunny disposition. When he laughed, he had the whole world at his feet.’ Bettlach took a sip of coffee, stirred it and was quiet for a moment. ‘It’s hard, when you’re sixteen years older,’ he continued. ‘I can still remember holding him in my arms when he was a baby. He seemed like a creature from another world.’ He smiled. ‘The age difference was harder for him than it was for me; he used to shout at me as if he couldn’t accept the fact that I was his older brother.’

Eschenbach sat quietly, expectant.

‘When he was small, it was relatively easy, but as he got older, he realised that I was ahead of him and had already done



everything that he wanted to do, and for a time he turned against Mother and me. He broke all the rules. He would be out night after night – no one knew where he was. When the phone rang at four in the morning, we knew he had been picked up somewhere because he was drunk, or on drugs, or had stolen something. The police stations became familiar with him after a while and it was equally clear who was picking him up and who had to pay for the damage he had caused.’ Johannes Bettlach stopped and bit into an amaretto he had taken from his plate. He chewed and went on: ‘It was a hard time for Philipp . . . and for our mother, Adele, of course,’ he added. ‘To me, it seemed he had only started all of this because he knew how much I deplored it, and because I had never done these things myself. It was a desperate attempt to better me.’

Eschenbach wondered whether he would see things the same way if it were his brother. He had no siblings.

‘And when I stopped getting angry – when I no longer found the night-time trips to the police station embarrassing, because they had become as much a part of my day as brushing my teeth, that’s when Philipp stopped. It had lost its appeal.’ Johannes Bettlach smiled. ‘But I think that’s normal for brothers. Later on we became friends.’

Eschenbach was astounded by the way Johannes Bettlach spoke about his brother. It wasn’t one-sided or short on detail. He spoke with distance but lovingly, warmly, rounding out his brother and bringing him to life. It was both happy and sad all at once. It reminded Eschenbach of the way a mother speaks about a child who is dearest to her because it is different and more difficult than the others.



‘It’s not much, I know. I’ve no clues as to how to help you with your inquiries . . .’ Bettlach passed a hand through his hair, turned to Eschenbach and looked at him with his blue eyes.

‘A start . . . it’s a start,’ said Eschenbach, clearing his throat. He was thinking about what Bettlach had said. It occurred to him that Bettlach had spoken at length about his brother’s childhood and teenage years but had hardly mentioned his recent life. This was a peculiarity that Eschenbach often observed in older people. According to the report, Philipp Bettlach was fifty-six: there must have been more to him than youthful rebellion and friendship.

‘Could you tell me a little about your brother’s family circumstances? Who did he live with? Did he have children?’

‘No,’ replied Bettlach plainly. Then, somewhat hesitantly, he added, ‘He was married once . . . it’s over twenty years ago now. Her name was Eveline. A nice girl . . . but they weren’t right for each other. They separated a year later. He had lived alone ever since.’ He hesitated again, then added: ‘He had a number of acquaintances.’ Bettlach smiled. ‘But that’s . . . that was his business. I didn’t get involved.’

‘And he worked for you, here at the bank?’ asked Eschenbach.

‘Yes, he was head of the marketing department and dealt with our foreign customers. He was very popular.’

At that moment, there was a knock at the door and the slim woman who had brought in the messages and the coffee stepped into the room.

‘Mr Trondtheim is here and would like to speak to you,’ she said to Bettlach.

‘I’d like to take a look at Philipp’s work space,’ said Eschenbach. ‘And get to know his closest colleagues.’





‘No problem. Ms Saladin will show you everything.’

The inspector slipped his Dictaphone into his jacket pocket and stood up. ‘And if anything occurs to you, you can reach me here any time . . .’ He gave Johannes Bettlach his card with the address and telephone number for headquarters. ‘My number’s on the back,’ he added.

Johannes Bettlach considered the seven-digit number written in a sweeping hand on the back of the card.

‘I’ll escort you down, Inspector,’ said the woman kindly. There was a sing-song quality to her accent.

‘Are you from Basel?’ he asked.

‘Can you tell?’

There was no question about it.

The inspector turned again. He wanted to say goodbye to Bettlach.

Bettlach had opened the window a crack, paused for a brief moment with his left hand in his trouser pocket and his right on the handle of the window. Then he walked over to the inspector, held out his hands – first his right, then his left – and the two men took their leave of one another just as they had greeted each other not long before.

Eschenbach saw the age spots on Bettlach’s hands and the melancholy in his eyes. Despite the sun, despite the warmth of his gestures and the friendliness in his voice, Eschenbach sensed a deep sadness emanating from the man.

Philipp Bettlach’s office was very grand for a man who had only been vice president of the bank. It was large and bright, and did not give the impression of a place of hard work. Eschenbach was reminded of the magazine *Good Living* and he tried to work out





how many times his own office could fit into the space – two or three, perhaps.

‘Mr Bettlach had the furniture specially made in Italy,’ said Constanze Rappold.

Eschenbach nodded.

She had introduced herself as Philipp Bettlach’s *personal assistant*. She said this in English, with a German accent. She wore a neat, navy-blue outfit, like Bettlach’s two other colleagues.

‘Could you tell me a little about his duties?’ asked the inspector. He had picked Constanze to interview first and sat with her at the oval conference table in the manager’s office.

‘I assume Dr Bettlach has told you that we are not allowed to divulge the names of clients.’

‘I don’t want names . . . I just want to know what Mr Bettlach’s duties were.’

‘Clients.’

‘What does that mean?’

‘I can’t . . . I can’t divulge the names of any clients.’

‘Jesus Christ!’ Eschenbach had to stop himself from crying out. Was she really this stupid, or was she just pretending? ‘I mean, did he oversee clients, visit them, was he responsible for acquiring clients? Did he carry out stock exchange transactions for them or pick their children up from boarding school? I don’t know what the job would entail . . . I’m a police officer.’

‘He did all of that . . .’

‘Care to be any vaguer?’

Her mouth twitched; she seemed to want to say something, then tears appeared in her eyes. She began to howl uncontrollably and hid her beautiful face in her hands.



After a while, she calmed down and Eschenbach carefully brought the conversation to an end. He didn't glean much more from the two other interviews that followed. They were all besotted with their boss. They probably would have jumped out of a window, or into the River Limmat, or off the top of the Eiffel Tower if Philipp Bettlach had asked them to. Whether it was because of his money, his laugh or his beautiful hands, they each adored him in their own way.

As far as his work was concerned – assuming that his activities could be described as such – Philipp Bettlach seemed to have had no small amount of success and had acquired all kinds of customers thanks to his charm, whether they were old money or jet-set types and nouveau riche show-offs. Philipp was everyone's favourite guy, a veritable Prince Charming, and every bank in Zurich had seemingly been more than happy to do business with him.

When Eschenbach walked back through the glass doors onto Rennweg, the heat almost knocked him off his feet. He looked at his watch. It was nearly four o'clock. He had completely lost track of time.

The sun burned his face and the tarmac beneath his feet felt like soft carpet. He thought about the ozone levels and the reports warning people against playing sports outside. For some reason unknown to him, this reminded Eschenbach of his cholesterol levels. Then he remembered Jagmetti and the dummy. He felt dizzy.

He crossed over to the shady side of the street. He marched past shops selling Swiss Army knives, digital weather stations, greetings cards, cuckoo clocks, cook's aprons, and other knick-knacks, and made for Paradeplatz.

He was sweating. It started at his temples. Then it crept over his hairline, onto his forehead, and then into his eyes. It burned. Failing to find his handkerchief, he tried to use the sleeve of his jacket to wipe it away. Wool wasn't very absorbent.

Why was he even wearing a woollen jacket and not one made of linen or cotton?

Now his forehead was itchy, as were his temples and his neck. He scratched them. His hand came away wet and his shirt looked as if it were formed of large puzzle pieces in different shades of blue.

At Paradeplatz, he got into a taxi and told the driver to head for the golf club.