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## **foreign rights**

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(pp 7-15)

*Wednesday*

At about three Farwick leaves the office building at one end of the market place. Just outside the door he stops. Is it warm or isn't it? He's carrying his light summer coat over his arm. Middle of May, which means one never knows quite what to do. Sometimes he finds it hard to make simple decisions.

The office building has only been completed recently. It caused quite a stir. Sixty years after the end of the war a break with historical building styles; readers' letters and protests expressing every possible opinion. The men Farwick has just been talking to, told him about it at length. Unfortunately, most of the office space is still empty. Really?, was all Farwick said. The usual skirmishing before such conversations.

Much of the surface of the square has been taken up. There are scattered heaps of freshly-dug earth. Farwick steps to the side. He still worries about getting in anyone's way. Someone who bumped into him, would also talk to him. He jams his briefcase between his knees. It's not warm and it's not cold. Whatever he does, it'll be wrong.

The coat is crumpled. Farwick would have liked to carry it elegantly over his arm, but something was hanging down on the wrong side, and he didn't want to fiddle about with it and still not sort it out. It's easy to spoil a departure that way. Now he wants to put his coat on, but he's not managing it, something is twisted. He lifts his left arm and shakes it, the coat should fall towards him.

Clothes can be so ridiculous, thinks Farwick. Putting one's arms and legs into these tubes. Perhaps that was an incentive to take up sport. Athletes are always wearing the right clothes. Farwick laughs. He still can't get his arm in the sleeve. Then something hits him, on the left, on his chest, and so hard, that it knocks him off his feet. He finds himself on his back on a pile of earth, the upper part of his body in an awkward position, because his arm is still only halfway inside his sleeve. Someone shouts. It doesn't sound as if it's anything to do with him.

Farwick rolls to the side, that's not easy on this heap of soft earth which gives way everywhere beneath him. Finally he's on his knees at least, he looks across to the church on the other side of the market place. It must have been a shot. Funny, thinks Farwick, when one's hit, one knows that it was a shot. But he didn't hear anything, and he can't see anyone who's firing a gun. And no one's running either. A small, orange-coloured vehicle is driving slowly towards the church, presumably a road sweeper. A couple of people look over. No wonder, thinks Farwick, the way he's kneeling in the earth.

He tries to stand up. It would be easier, if it wasn't for this damned coat. At last he's pulled it off, but he can't get on his feet, he's too weak. He doesn't feel any pain, but on his left side, from the chest upwards, there's nothing there any more. Farwick gets one foot on the ground, that's all. Now he's kneeling, as if he was waiting to be knighted.

There's someone here shooting at passers-by! Farwick supports himself with his right hand on his right knee, he leans forward a little. This could work. The cobblestones are very close, a trace of green in the gaps. And whoever gets hit, it's their bad luck. Then someone speaks to him.

"No, no," says Farwick. He can't see the speaker, he's only aware of the shadow. And he knows it's a man. A good feeling really, some kind of cover. The man says something again. Then he walks away. "Not!", says Farwick, futilely. Now that the shadow has gone, he feels completely defenceless. And these silly piles of dirt aren't any cover either. Farwick turns on his left knee, this is the way he has to go, back. At last he's able to stand up, but now that he's standing, breathing hurts terribly.

Behind the bit of black earth the office building begins, a narrow window just above ground level, it must be some kind of basement. Shit, thinks Farwick. Getting in the sights of a lunatic. But now! He manages the first two steps quite well, when he's hit silently in the right leg.

As he screams, Farwick feels earth in his mouth. All that effort for nothing. And where is his briefcase? His constant, dear companion on his trips. Doesn't matter. "Movement," he says into the earth. Kunstfeld would have said: Roland, my fine young friend, now I want to see something!

Farwick draws up his left leg and pushes himself forward with it, towards the facade and towards the window, he digs his right hand into the ground and pulls. He could use a bit of help. And in fact someone is shouting. For the police.

Now the pain is everywhere and loud and unbearable. The only good thing is that Farwick knows all about unbearable pain. Because it tells one, how close one is to one's training targets. Or rather: how far from them. If pain is unbearable, then one has to do something. "That's what I know!" says Farwick into the dirt. And he increases the pace, right hand, left leg. How much further? Three yards. Or two? Wrong. The distance is determined by one's own strength.

Time for a break, Roland? No thanks, I can keep going.

The third shot again strikes soundlessly, a blow, as if from below. Farwick imagines the bang to go with it, but he doesn't feel any pain. How could he? Unbearable pain can't be intensified. Perhaps it hit the right leg again, but then the other man would have boomed. Because the right leg is no use any more, it's knocked out. In other words: Now he's got a real advantage. And he's going to use it. Just watch this! Roland Farwick is getting his second wind.

He's going to make it. The wonderful and all too rare feeling, of for once being really good. Doesn't matter at what. Farwick gets through this dirt as if he's got wings. He's already at the window. There's something metal in the ground here; now it's easier to breathe, it's cutting into his forehead and helping him think. It must be a grating, above a shaft.

The fourth shot strikes the ground beside Farwick. As if someone was hit close to him. Earth is thrown up. So the other man wants to finish the job. But now Roland Farwick can stay ahead by his own efforts. He pushes the fingers of his right hand through the grating; the grating comes away. What to do with it? Farwick has to draw it sideways over his head. That hurts, he clenches his teeth. Then someone grabs his left leg.

Farwick wants to shout, Get lost! But he can't, he hasn't got the breath to do it. And something hits his head. The grating sings beside his ear. Behind him someone screams. Serves him right. Tyres screech. Farwick gets the grating to the side, after that his right arm is useless.

A cramp of course. Farwick knows the feeling, only he hasn't had it for a long time. "Ok," he says. So now he has to go into the shaft head first. Or he rolls into it sideways, best on his left side, it's all dead anyway. For a moment he sees the sky, divided by a glass canopy, then he falls, back sticking out, down. He lands, hard and painfully. Simultaneously the fifth bullet hits the window, now at last it's really loud, the pane shatters, Farwick closes his eyes as tight as he can, because of the splinters, but no splinters fall. And then it's quiet. Time to take stock.

The most important thing is always the head. One can say it a thousand times, and people nod and never understand. Farwick's nodding, when Kunstfeld was talking. Roland, you haven't understood a thing! Now he has understood, but there's a problem. Farwick is lying on his right arm; even if it wanted to, it couldn't help him again. Has done its duty.

And on the left side everything's gone. Farwick closes his eyes and concentrates on his left hand. "Respond!", he says. He makes a fist, and out of nothing a new pain answers him. His hand is lying on his stomach. Farwick waits a little, then he makes his hand work its way up, towards his head, bit by bit it draws itself up by the material of his jacket, the arm in tow behind it. When the fingers reach the throat, they report a liquid. Must be blood, that was to be expected.

"Keep going." The fingers get to touch his right ear and draw themselves up the skull by it. Once they slip off, then the place Farwick wants to get to is reached. He sees with the groping fingertips, until he knows: The bone is intact. There's no hole in his head. There's no bit of metal in his brain. At most a scratch.

Farwick laughs. Above him the rectangle of sky, in part paler blue, in part darker, to his left the bullet-shattered window, above that the facade, a thin reddish line. And then he screams, his hand still limply at the wound on his head. It's more a squealing. Why can't you ever be properly happy?, Kunstfeld once said; it was after his first world record. Why are you just lying around here? That's not proper happiness. What kind of guy are you!

But now Farwick can be happy. If he could he would scream even louder. Because if he sees nothing more than the sky and the wall, then the other man doesn't see him. And if he doesn't see him, then he can't hit him either. There aren't any rifles that shoot round corners.

“Arsehole,” says Farwick.

He’s not ashamed. Defeated enemies deserve every bit of mockery they get. He wants to say other words as well, but he swallows the wrong way. He should cough, but everything that’s on his left side doesn’t want to. And then the sixth shot strikes the facade, splinters hit him in the face.

What’s he done wrong? What, fuck it. Farwick presses his chin into his chest and tries to raise his head, as he does so his stomach muscles quiver as if he hadn’t done any training for years. A pitiful state of affairs, but he can see what the problem is. His legs are still leaning against the edge of the shaft, his feet are sticking out into the blue. That’s what the arsehole is aiming at now, and Farwick can’t move. His head falls back, and now he can’t do anything at all any more.

All he can still do is talk. He says: “Help!” It’s no more than a whisper. No one likes to say help! He regrets it immediately and waits for the next shot. It could have been a victory, a real victory, one that’s never forgotten, a result that’s never bettered.

“Help,” he says once again. Then someone opens the shattered window and pulls him out of the shaft.

Since the beginning of May the weather has been pleasant, unchanging, not warm and not cold, the sky usually only a little overcast. Grambach is walking to the hospital. It’s not far, little more than half a mile from the market place. Anyway he’s in no hurry. Berntrieder, his deputy in the special unit, is in charge of interviewing the witnesses. They’ve been assigned as many men as possible; it’ll still take hours. The forensic people will also need until evening to find out more than the obvious. And it will hardly be possible to talk to the victim. They had to operate on the man immediately.

Men in track-suits and dressing gowns are standing outside the main entrance of the hospital, smoking. Grambach looks one in the face, the man greets him and turns away. It’s quiet in the entrance hall. Grambach knows the place; he was born here, his father was a patient here recently, he couldn’t even say how many victims he’s already seen here. In June Grambach will be forty three, he’s been a policeman for twenty years; sometimes he even believes he can physically feel, what routine is.

The emergency ward sick-rooms are on the second floor. Grambach takes the stairs,

that's the least thing he can do about being overweight. He climbs quickly, two steps at a time. He's hardly out of breath when he gets there; he isn't ill, he just weighs a couple of pounds too many. When he inquires at the nurses' room, he pretends he doesn't know who the wounded man is. That shouldn't be a surprise, after such a long time. The nurse doesn't make any remark. She passes him on.

The surgeon in charge meets Grambach in the corridor. The man is in a bad mood, he should have been at home since this morning. And in bed, so that he's no risk to his patients. They walk down the corridor side by side. But he doesn't want to complain says the doctor. Multiple gunshot wounds, not something he gets to see every day. At any rate not something one falls asleep over.

"And?" says Grambach.

"Right thigh. Large wound area, not very deep. Ploughed up the flesh. Rather difficult to sew. It'll leave an impressive scar."

"And apart from that?"

"A graze under the left arm. Pectoralis major. Here." The surgeon stops. He raises an arm and presses on a point below the armpit. "Went along the rib. It'll hurt for quite a while. But basically it's not so serious either."

"How far from the heart?"

The surgeon holds up two fingers together. "That much. But it's deceptive. There's a world of difference."

And the head wound?

"A scratch," says the surgeon. It's probably not from a bullet. The bruising on his back is worse. But how did that happen?

"He fell down a light shaft," says Grambach. "And may I ask how the patient is?"

"Ask him yourself."

That's something Grambach isn't prepared for.

The surgeon grins. "They must have been economising on the anaesthetic. He's already awake again." In any case he had not often seen anything like it. Mid-forties and the body looked as if it was carved out of stone. A pretty unusual guy.

"What?" says Grambach. "Do you mean, you've never heard of the man?"

The surgeon looks at the file. "Farwick, Ernst Roland, born 17.3.1960. Profession: Sales representative, resident in - "

Grambach interrupts him. "That's Roland Farwick!"

"Yes. And?"

"He broke the world decathlon record three times."

"Then I really should know him." The surgeon looks at the file again. "Farwick?" He shakes his head. It doesn't mean anything to him. When did he retire?

"1984," says Grambach. In August. Eighth August 84.

"Well then!" The surgeon taps his forehead with the file. "I was ten."

*(pp 35-43)*

The press conference starts very punctually, despite the confusion caused by all the TV crews. They should really move to a bigger room, but everyone's against it; the reports must make the eight o'clock news. Once it gets going, Grambach immediately notices, that Vollrath is trying hard not to make too big a thing of the case. But he's in a dilemma. Because if he denies too firmly, that the once world-famous top athlete Roland Farwick only barely avoided being murdered, then in next to no time he's created the spectre of a serial killer who only by chance has begun his career with somebody well-known. Hard, then, to get the balance right.

Vollrath does his best. He holds out against the questions of the journalists, who very soon start repeating themselves mercilessly. After a quarter of an hour the camera crews disappear, leaving behind the newspaper people. Grambach, too, answers questions. He can only say it all once again; as best he can, he tries to find a different way of saying it, it shouldn't all sound too stupid. Finally a young journalist raises his hand. Should VIP's not get better protection in public?

That takes us back to the start again, thinks Grambach, the start of getting older: the experience, that things repeat themselves. Dumb questions, for example. The talking for the sake of talking, that one thought was already over and done with. "Of course," he says. And then for the young journalist he calculates, how many policemen would be needed just to guard the footballers of the premier league round the clock. As he does so, he looks at the young journalist and nods, then the young man nods too, in

exactly the same rhythm. Out of the corner of his eye Grambach notices that Vollrath is looking at him. Perhaps he's already gone too far.

"Well, if there are no more questions?" says Vollrath. They could imagine, how much there was to be done now. He slowly stands up, still looking into the room. No one must be allowed to feel, that they are being thrown out.

"Thanks," says Grambach, when they're out in the corridor.

"You deal with it very well. You're allowed to be a little bit angry." Vollrath gestures with his hand. "Tomorrow at eight we'll throw everything together again." They say goodbye.

Berntrieder is standing at the end of the corridor; he's holding something up and waving it. "I've got it," he says, as Grambach comes up to him.

"What?"

"Decathlon." Berntrieder reads from the cover of the DVD. "The royal discipline of track and field athletics. Gripping highlights from the big competitions of the last fifty years. Someone in the burglary squad gave it to me. So, what happened? Your place or mine?"

Grambach laughs. There's a DVD recorder in the meeting room on their floor. The chapter headings on the DVD correspond to the sequence of European championships, world championships and Olympic Games. The right place is soon found. Los Angeles 1984. It's a fairly perfunctory compilation of TV material, accompanied by a commentary alternately pathos-laden or of forced cheerfulness "Take a look at that," says Berntrieder. Twenty years ago now."

It's true. But it's not obvious at first sight. At most when the camera pans across the crowd: by the clothes of the spectators, their hairstyles and sunglasses, by the jackets of the officials beside the track.

Nevertheless, thinks Grambach, I recognise him. It's the summer of 1984. And it's twenty years ago, almost twenty one, to be exact. It doesn't look ancient yet, but it won't be long now before it does. It happens quite suddenly. At some point there's a break, thinks Grambach. One minute one was still bound up with everything, right in the middle of this jumble of taken for granted things, the fashions, the images - and suddenly one's out of touch. Then everything's old - oneself included.

A camera pan over the roof of the stadium. The sky on the screen is the one over the summer, in which Grambach turned twenty two but had already been living away from home for five years. Far away, in the big city of Berlin, that was itself nothing but a walled-in bit of the provinces. 1984 was the first year of his present life and the last year of a completely different one. Grambach realises that he's been holding his breath since the DVD has been playing. Why? he thinks.

Almost the whole chapter is about Farwick's disqualification. He was the clear favourite at the Los Angeles Olympics. His great rival, the reigning Olympic champion, had won the world championship for the first time the previous year; but Farwick hadn't taken part, for tactical reasons, it was said. Almost as a counter-move, Farwick had bettered his own world record, as if to show, who was the real boss. And in the pre-Olympic competitions he had even added a couple of points. The world champion on the other hand had been plagued by minor injuries ever since winning the title. So they hadn't met in a competition again.

Los Angeles, says the commentator on the DVD, had been the first TV Olympics. And Roland Farwick was made for TV. An exemplary athlete. The personification of the track and field athlete. Not a specialist machine for just the one kind of performance and no other, but a sportsman measured by the standards of Antiquity. A truly Olympian hero with a body worth sculpting in stone or casting in bronze. And twenty four years young. Everyone was anticipating his first really big victory.

"He's really laying it on," said Berntrieder.

A couple of pictures of Farwick, as he's warming up at the edge of the 100 metre track. First day, first discipline. The draw means that Farwick isn't up against the world champion. He's already run, not a very impressive time, but he didn't display any weakness either. Farwick isn't an outstanding runner, he's too heavy for that. His 1500 metres at the end of the second day are a struggle, one could almost feel sorry for the powerful man. No, Farwick has the strength - but he knows how to deploy his strength intelligently, a man fully in command of the techniques of jumping and throwing. In short, someone who can get the best out of himself.

Farwick's 100 metre result that day is close to the upper limit of what he can achieve. It's not an outstanding start to the competition, but not a bad one either. In fact, Farwick can't draw ahead right at the beginning of a decathlon championship, at least

not as long as the running comes first. And that's not going to change for the foreseeable future. Even in sport there are traditions that are sacrosanct.

The second discipline is the long jump. And the world champion almost matches his best performance. Now that's a surprise. The man is clearly in good condition after all. Perhaps the talk about injuries was no more than psychological game playing in the run-up to the competition. So the duel everyone wants is really going to take place at last.

Grambach watches. And he knows exactly what's about to start now: the end. As he begins the approach run for his first jump, Roland Farwick is twenty four years old, but as a world-class athlete he only has another hour to live. His first jump is a disaster. There's nothing right about it. It's not a jump at all, not much more than a hop at the end of a screwed up run, an expedient, so that he doesn't completely embarrass himself. The result is not even enough for a points score which would make it worth staying in the competition.

What's going on here? Is the man injured? As well as was already possible at the time, the cameras follow him from the pit to the bench. No, he's not getting any treatment. He walks up and down, doesn't talk to anyone. Once he gestures up to the place in the stand where his trainer is sitting in the crowd. It could mean anything. But perhaps also: Could be worse, There's still everything to play for..

Which is true. He's not finished yet! One can see that Farwick is right away trying to concentrate again. As yet nothing terrible has happened, nothing that can't be made good. How very long everything takes, however, till everyone else has jumped! To bear that, says the commentator, is probably the hardest thing in the whole decathlon.

"Is this it?" says Berntrieder. Grambach waves his hand. Not now!

At the second attempt Farwick jumps so far, that the crowd shouts out. What a jump! That's not the jump of a decathlete, says the commentator. Only someone who can't do anything but jump, and wants to be the best at it, jumps like that. But the attempt is disallowed. Farwick overstepped, just, but it can be clearly seen in a close-up of the take off board. If the attempt had been allowed, he would certainly have taken the lead. Probably by a considerable margin, says the commentator, but the mark is not recorded anywhere. It wasn't even measured. All the same, now it's certain at least, that Farwick isn't injured.

But what on earth has got into the man? He should have played safe at the second jump, even if he lost an inch in front of the board. What Farwick would really have needed now was a jump, which keeps the competition open. After that he could have taken a risk again. At the final jump! But now that's all he has left. And has to play safe. That's bad, very bad.

The camera catches the world champion. He's keeping his distance from Farwick. And he's taking care not to show any reaction. No, he hasn't even realised, that the favourite has been behaving like a beginner. Usually the world champion always likes to play a couple of psychological tricks, but now he evidently wants to show everyone, that he's not taking advantage of the situation. And that it's nothing to do with him. He's only concerned with his own performance.

A beautiful day in Los Angeles, 8th August 1984. A bit before midday, but already fairly warm. The conditions are still good for an athlete. In the afternoon it will be unbearably hot. Farwick takes the run-up for his third and final attempt. No microphone records whether he shouts as he takes-off, normally he doesn't shout. Again it's a tremendous jump, technically absolutely flawless and an incredible distance, landing on both feet and rolling forward sideways so as not to lose the fraction of an inch. The spectators near to the pit have all stood up. The official at the take-off board bends over the white plank. It looks as if he can't believe his eyes. But the print is plain to see. Slowly he raises the red flag.

For the second time! Farwick has overstepped the second time in a row. After a completely messed up first jump. He gets credited a ridiculously small number of points for the long jump. Even if he got his best result in each of the following eight disciplines, he still wouldn't be in the running for a medal. No need for any lengthy calculations. It's over. Farwick packs his things, then he disappears from the stadium, after a few minutes an announcement is made that he's left the competition.

People are shocked, says the commentator on the DVD. A hero has fallen. Instead of a medal, the jeers of the world of sport.

Grambach looks for the volume control on the remote to turn down the sound. When he doesn't find it right away, he swears.

"Now I remember," says Berntrieder. "But only vaguely. The exemplary athlete!  
And he retired after that?"

“Yes. There were crushing comments in the papers. Some journalists even asked if this was a proper way to use the public funds for sport; but Farwick had been funding himself for a long time anyway. They said, there are defeats, that has to be accepted. But surely not such an amateurish failure! A performance like that, as if he only had himself to think about. Farwick had carried the German flag when the athletes entered the stadium at the opening ceremony.

“I bet he was doped,” said Berntrieder. He’s gone back a bit and is looking at the final jump again. When the red flag goes up, he freezes the image. Farwick is standing at the far end of the pit, hands on his hips he’s looking over to the starting line. “He took something and didn’t want to be caught. Rather an exit like that, than a lifetime ban.”

“Possible,” says Grambach. He looks to the side, away from the TV. He can’t bear to look at the picture.

Bertrieder notices. “What’s wrong?”

For a moment Grambach is about to tell him where he was when Farwick overstepped the foul line. “Nothing,” he says then. He points at the picture. “But it doesn’t help us. It doesn’t provide a motive.” He stands up. “Apart from which, it happened a long time ago. It’s got nothing to do with us here and now.”

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