

# My challenging way to overalls

## Preface

Hello dear readers and friends of overalls and bondage. I have written a new fictional story about a boy who is looking for something which he himself does not know what it is. He lets us participate in his feelings and makes exciting experiences around the overalls. It is a story around the topic of overalls fetish and related fetishes like avoidance-free education and bondage. The boy in the story makes his first experiences with the topic without knowing what it means and why he has such contradictory feelings.

The story takes place in the 80s of the 20th century and is told by the boy himself half a year after the events took place. There could possibly be a sequel that the boy tells as an adult, when he is 30, how he felt in his further life. If it should interest you.

I hope you will enjoy reading it. As always, if you feel bothered or provoked by the content, you should not read it under any circumstances. Everything is purely fictional and does not provide instructions for described actions.

## The purchase with which everything began

Hello, my name is Robert but I prefer to be called Rob. My childhood was messed up from the beginning until I got help from some nice people.

I was 12 years old and pretty much on my own. Our place in the suburbs was actually quite nice and the house I lived in was big. I did not have any hobby or sports clubs. But for some time now an idea was driving me.

I tried in vain to find a pair of overalls at Karstadt department store in the city center. At first I had to buy the bus fare for 1,50 Marks<sup>1</sup> from my 28 Marks and 65 Pfennig, which I had collected together, and then in the children's department there were no overalls for me at all, but only for babies. Disappointed, I went back to my district. But why was I even looking for overalls? Well, I did not really know myself. A few weeks ago a new boy came into my class, his name is Jonas, and he quickly became an outsider, because he always comes to school with a pair of overalls, and he also behaved a bit strange. I don't know if I can judge that, I have hardly any friends myself, because many parents of my classmates don't want their children to play with me, because of my father.

Yes, my father, many people don't like him and I can understand that, I don't like him either, but I am straying completely off topic. These overalls of Jonas fascinate me

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<sup>1</sup> The (Deutsch-)Mark was the currency of Germany until they started with the Euro in 2002. At that time it was worth about ½ euro or dollar. There were 100 Pfennig in one Mark.

somehow. The straps over the shoulder and the buttons on the side. When I watch Jonas moving around in them, I always have to think about how he is enclosed by these overalls and that is what I think is so cool. Unfortunately I cannot explain it better.

But I have hardly talked to Jonas to ask him about the wearing, I don't want to lose my status in the class: even if I don't play with my classmates in my free time, I am not one of the losers in the class. So I try to find out myself. Of course, I wouldn't be able to show my face at school with such overalls. When Jonas came, he was teased quite a bit, of course also by me, but I'm a bit sorry about that now.

Luckily I always have some decent clothes in my closet, and when my father has a girlfriend he charges her to get something for me. This is then mostly quite useful and modern. One of them, Erika, was even quite nice and took me shopping a couple of times and I was allowed to choose something myself, but unfortunately she's gone again. If my father would give me pocket money, I would try to buy something myself, but he says money is not for children; I think he doesn't realize how old I am already.

Sometime after the failure at Macy's I noticed a store in our suburb. There must have been a small supermarket there, but now it looked like a clothes store. But not like the one in the city center where everything is big and bright and everything hangs on individual stands. Here it was completely different, and after some hesitations I dared to go inside. There were many narrow corridors and clothes were hung in two rows on top of each other in many places. I couldn't even reach the upper rows. It already took me about 10 minutes to find the rows with the pants. There the pants were hanging close together on hangers and every now and then there was a number on the bar. That was surely the size but I had no idea what it meant. Then I noticed an area where I saw straps hanging down from the trousers between the hangers. Suddenly my heart was pounding: were there really overalls in this store? I looked to the right and to the left to see if anyone was there. The store was a self-service store and at the entrance I had only seen one employee who was at the cash register.

Since I didn't see anyone in the aisle, I took a closer look at the pants, and they were really overalls. There were blue and black jeans overalls and also blue and white striped and red and white checked overalls. I could hardly believe my luck and thoughts flashed through my mind whether the rest of my money would be enough and whether the woman at the cash register would sell anything to a child like me. But then I concentrated on first finding something suitable.

I looked at the numbers on the bars. In the bottom row, which I could reach, were numbers from 152 to 176 and the top row that I couldn't reach were numbers from 110 to 146. That didn't mean anything to me, so I just had to try it out. I looked for a pair of black overalls from the 158 area and went to one of the changing rooms at the end of the corridor. There I took off my pants and put my legs into the overalls. The bib hung down in the front and the straps in the back dragged over the floor. I did not have to open the side buttons, I could just step in. I noticed very quickly that the pants

were much too big for me, but I couldn't help that at that moment and had to go on. The pants slipped down again and again when I tried to grab the straps in the back. So I decided to try it outside the cabin in front of the mirror.

So I stepped in front of the mirror without rechecking the hallway and kept trying. Finally I had caught one of the two straps and could put it over my shoulder. The feeling was not so bad, but somehow I had expected something else. What I did not really know.

In the moment when I tried to get the other strap, I noticed that a woman was standing in the hallway exactly at the place where I had taken the overalls off the bar before. Next to her stood a girl in overalls, who was a little smaller and probably younger than me. My heart stopped, this woman watched me while I was clumsily trying to get the straps over my shoulder.

When our eyes met she started to smile very friendly. I must have had a totally frightened expression on my face and I became even more nervous. But when she noticed that I was frightened, she turned her gaze to the rows of clothes again. I hoped fervently that she would not speak to me. When I finally had the second strap over my shoulder, I tried to hook the straps to the bib, which I could hardly do, because they were much too long. I looked in the mirror and saw how stupid I looked in the much too big overalls.

Then I looked again at the woman, who had come a few steps closer.

"Boy, can I help you? Those overalls are much too big for you," she said to me. I would have liked to sink into the ground if I had been able to, but I could only shake my head.

Then the woman had already arrived near me and looked around the corner at the end of the corridor.

"Is your mother not here?" she asked next.

"No, she's long gone," I said very quietly.

She immediately understood that I didn't mean from this store but that my mother had not been in my life for a long time. And then she looked at me pitifully and smiled again very warm and lovingly.

"And your daddy is here, or are you all alone?" followed the next question. She looked into my still open dressing room and saw my jeans and wallet lying there.

Then she grabbed my overalls that I was wearing, more or less, and pulled out the little white card.

"That's a 158, looking at you, you should fit a 140 or at most a 146," she said and gently pushed me back at my shoulder to the area where the overalls hung on the bar and I had to be careful not to trip over the legs of the overalls. Her daughter watched the

whole spectacle with some disinterest. I was still in shock when I went there and I didn't know how to rally or how to break it up.

The woman took a hanger and a pair of black overalls in size 140 from the upper row and held them in front of my body. "Come, take off the other one, this one should fit better," she said to me. As if in a trance I took off the overalls again and gave them to the woman. With that I stood in the middle of the hallway in only my underwear. Then she held the other one open for me to get in. What I found somehow nice, but I wasn't used to anyone helping me to put clothes on. For the little girl it seemed to be quite normal.

When I put my legs into the overalls, my head was working again and I answered her question.

"I'm here alone and my father won't go shopping with me."

"Yes, I thought so, and I'd like to help you. What's your name, boy?" she then asked.

"My name's Rob," I said.

At that moment she pulled the overalls up and put the bib on my chest. The feeling was indescribable, the overalls were tight around my hips and the bib was felt on my stomach and chest after flipping it up. Then the woman also put the straps over my shoulder and I felt them on my back. Again the straps were too long, but the woman put the buckle higher up the straps. This was easily done by folding a small part on the buckle upwards. After shortening, the part was pressed down again.

Then the woman hooked the buckles to the buttons on the bib and the overalls were pulled up higher, which was a much nicer feeling than with the much too big overalls. Then the woman grabbed me by the shoulder and gently turned me around my own axis and inspected me from all sides. She was obviously not quite satisfied yet. She then tucked my white t-shirt into the bottom part at the sides and closed the buttons at the sides. Now I had the feeling of being trapped inside and being hugged by the overalls. Exactly what I had been looking for, it felt great. But the woman was still not satisfied and loosened the buckles again and made them a good two centimeters tighter. Afterwards the overalls were pulled noticeably into my butt crack, but I still found the feeling indescribably beautiful. I didn't know what to say and felt the overalls with my hands in front and back. The woman watched me very amused and smiled very satisfied.

The embarrassment of the situation was gone and I couldn't get enough of the great feeling of the overalls. "Come to the mirror and look at yourself" I was asked, but at that moment a boy came walking around the corner at the end of the corridor and shouted, "Mama Mama, may I have these," waving a pair of sneakers in front of his face. The problem was that I recognized the voice immediately. It was Jonas from my class. When he came closer I could also recognize him, he was wearing overalls as

usual and had red curly hair. His overalls today were blue/white striped, which made him look even more childish. But what do I write here, we *are* children.

But the problem was that I had been teasing him about these overalls less than 2 weeks ago together with others in the class. Both I and Jonas stood there with open mouths as if rooted on the spot. His mother first looked at him and then at me again. His sister did not understand anything and looked at her mother questioningly.

"Oh Jonas, do you two know each other? Can you introduce us, please!" said his mother.

"Ahhh... Yes... Hello Rob! Mom, this is Rob, I mean Robert. Rob this is my mom" said Jonas as he got the situation somewhat under control again.

"And how do you know each other?" was the next question.

"From school, we go to the same class" he said matter-of-factly and looked at me from top to bottom and back. But he didn't say anything about the overalls I was wearing.

"OK, I'm glad about that. Robert is here alone and needs some help with the shopping. So I help him. But at the moment we need new chic pants for you and Pia for the birthday party of uncle Uwe. We'll look for shoes later, OK Jonas!" said his mother and stroked him lovingly over his head.

"Well Robert, go look at yourself in the mirror. I'll find something for Jonas and Pia in the meantime" I was asked. I followed the request and went back to the dressing rooms and the mirror. Jonas stopped with his mother and they whispered something that I couldn't understand. My knees became a little weak. On the one hand I enjoyed the wonderful feeling of the overalls and on the other hand I was afraid that Jonas would tell how I had teased him and now I wanted to buy a pair of overalls myself. Before the mirror I looked at the overalls and I liked them very much. The black made them much more inconspicuous than the striped ones Jonas and his sister were wearing. And I was not interested in drawing attention with them, on the contrary, the feeling when wearing them was what I was looking for.

Then all three of them came in my direction and Jonas his mother had another black and a dark red overalls over her arm and asked me, "and do you like the pants?"

I just nodded slightly. But Jonas his mother was still very friendly to me. So I kept hoping that Jonas hadn't told her anything.

Then his mother hung the two overalls on a hook of the cabin where my clothes were lying. And then fumbled around with Jonas' buckles of the overalls to open them and take them off in front of the changing room. Jonas was not bothered and let his mother do it. Then she gave him the new black overalls and took off his sisters in the hallway. She also helped her to put on the new overalls.

In the meantime Jonas had put on his new overalls himself and was much more skilled at getting the straps over his shoulders than I was. But while adjusting the buckles Jonas his mother took over again and tightened the buckles.

"Mom please not so tight!" he even complained briefly. But his mother gave him a light slap on his fingers to show him that she would adjust them now. But she kept her loving and warm smile, so she was obviously not really angry with Jonas, even though he was a bit annoyed and took his hands down.

When she was finished, Jonas was asked to look at himself in the mirror while his mother continued to look after his sister. Then we both stood next to each other in front of the mirror and basically wore the same black overalls. Only with Jonas they sat a little looser around his hips and had a slightly higher bib.

"You look really good in such overalls," Jonas said to me with a slightly gloating grin on his face.

"Yes, are you serious?" was the only thing I could answer. Knowing that Jonas now knew a secret about me.

"Yeah, man, don't worry. We'll talk about it tomorrow at school and then I think you'll have to explain a few things to me," Jonas said again with a real smile on his face.

Shortly afterwards Jonas and his sister had to put on their old overalls again and their mother was happy with the fit and wanted to buy both overalls. While Jonas and his sister were changing again, I thought about how to get out of this situation. I didn't know what the overalls I was wearing would cost and if my money would be enough. I also couldn't put on my old pants and disappear, because my dressing room was still being used by Jonas his mother for their stuff.

I walked a few steps in front of the mirror in a circle and soaked up the nice feeling of the overalls again. I knew that it would not last much longer.

"Robert, and what about you? Do you like the pants too? Would you like to have them?" Jonas' mother asked me.

"Um... Yes... uh... I... I... I... don't know what it costs and if I have enough money." I stammered. Thereupon I was turned a little bit by Jonas his mother and she pressed my upper body slightly down to look at the price tag behind me at the trouser pocket.

"32 marks" she said and turned me back.

"Oh ... no ... I do not. Too bad" I said disappointed and started to take off the overalls again. But I was stopped by her immediately.

"How much do you have?" she then asked me.

"27 marks and 15 pfennigs" I said immediately, because I had counted it exactly before.

"OK, let's see if we can find one that you get for that price!" she said to me and then smiled.

Why was Jonas his mother so nice to me? We did not know each other at all. Up to this point in my life I had mostly had bad experiences with adults. My father hated me and my mother had run away a long time ago and all the girlfriends my father had afterwards had only shown me that I was in their way. But this woman here radiated such love and warmth that I could not refuse her help.

So after some hesitation I said, "I don't want to keep you, you have helped me enough already."

"Oh Robert, that's sweet of you. But I really like doing it," she said and stroked my head again.

"Mama, what's up with the shoes, may I have them? They are so cool," said Jonas suddenly, who had the shoes back in his hand.

"Jonas, darling, I'm afraid not today. The two pants for you are expensive enough. Maybe another time. Please bring them back and take your sister with you, please. We need another 10 minutes here, OK?! You can play in the front for the while" his mother said to Jonas and he was disappointed but obeyed immediately and took his sister by the hand and went with her to the shoe department.

Then Jonas' mother went back with me to the racks where the overalls were hanging and took another pair of overalls from the top row. This time it was a blue and white striped one, like Jonas was wearing it again. First she looked at the label on the back pocket.

"You see, this one costs only 25 marks, that would work," she said and immediately began to take off my black overalls again right in the hallway. I was a bit embarrassed by that, but since no other customer had passed by there in the last quarter of an hour, it was not a big deal. I was again helped to take them off as well as put them on. It was really weird but I kind of liked it because nobody at home had taken care of me like that for a long time.

These overalls had a stretchy elastic band in the back and after Jonas his mother adjusted and fastened the straps on me, the side buttons were closed as well. I felt the elastic in my back snuggle these overalls to my body with every breath I took. The feeling of the overalls was even a little better than the first one, even though I liked the black one a little better visually.

"And how do you like these?" I was then asked.

"They feels great," I said very satisfied.

"I would be very pleased if Jonas would see it the same way. Then it would be a lot easier," she said and smiled happily at me.

"What do you mean by that?" I asked back curiously.

"Oh no reason, he likes to grumble about these great bottoms. While they are so practical. ... Are you friends?" she casually asked back.

"Um... Well ... not yet" I said uncertainly.

"That's a pity, I think you're really nice and Jonas could use a friend at the new school," she said to me.

"Yes OK, let's see, he hasn't been in my class for that long," I said.

Then I wanted to take off my overalls again and was glad to have finally found a pair. I only had to get the overalls home secretly and I could wear them in the evening as long as I wanted and I liked it. My father was not at home in the evening anyway and he probably wouldn't notice them on me anyway. Only our housekeeper I had to let in somehow so she wouldn't ask questions when I put them in the laundry.

When I put my hand on the buckle to open the overalls, Jonas' mother gently held my hand and told me "Leave the overalls on right away if you like them. we will have your old trousers packed in a bag at the cash desk."

Jonas his mother on the one hand had something loving and warm in her manner but on the other hand you also felt with her that you should not talk back. With all her warmth and kindness she also had a strict side and so I did not dare to go against her. Even though I now had to walk home with my overalls and everyone could see me. Or was it a little revenge because I had teased Jonas at school and he had told her and now she wanted to get one on me?

But no, her warm hand on mine. I did not know such tenderness from home anymore. I stuck with the belief that this woman was very well-disposed and so I agreed to keep the overalls on. She then gave me my wallet from the dressing cabin and put my old trousers together with the other new overalls over her arms and sent me to the cash desk; Jonas and Pia would wait for me in the play area.

Indeed, next to the cash register there was a small play corner with some Lego Duplo and some children's books where Jonas played together with his sister. I joined them and Jonas looked at me somewhat reproachfully and checked me out again from top to bottom. Then he said "Oh interesting, could mom talk you into her favorite model? While you were laughing about them just a few days ago. My mother is really good, isn't she?" said Jonas with a slightly sarcastic undertone.

"Ahh Jonas, sorry pardon me for making fun of you, I'm sorry. OK?" I said with real regret.

"Ahh it's OK, you're not the first. But you really must explain to me tomorrow at school how you came to this," Jonas then said to me.

Before I could say anything about it, his mother called over from the cash register. "Robert, could you come here, please."

I replied: "Yes, Mrs. Bergmann, I'm coming." I had remembered Jonas' last name because it was so simple.

"Can you please tell her at a suitable opportunity that I don't like my full name?" I said to Jonas and went to the cash register. The feeling of the overalls was just indescribably beautiful. With every move and every step I felt the overalls on my body. I floated on cloud nine.

At the cash desk Mrs. Bergmann got a pair of scissors and cut off the label on the back of his overalls and gave it to the saleswoman.

"This is what the young man is paying for, I'll pay the rest" she said to the saleswoman and smiled happily at me again.

"24.99 please" said the cashier. I pulled my wallet out of my pocket and took out a 10 mark bill and put it on the counter, then I opened the coin compartment and counted the rest in 2 marks and 1 mark and also 50 penny pieces on the counter. I had never spent so much money at once on anything. And I hoped that nobody would ask where I got the money from.

Fortunately this did not happen. The cashier gave me a penny back. Jonas' mother then told me that I should keep this penny safe; it would be my lucky penny and it would always remind me of this day. I didn't know then how right she proved to be.

When I put the penny back into my wallet, I wanted to put it back in my pocket, but Mrs. Bergmann grabbed the bib of my overalls and opened the bib pocket, which was closed with a snap fastener. "Put it here Robert, it is safer. You can always feel it there and you won't lose it," she then said to me. Here too I obeyed without questioning. But of course she was right here too. For one thing it made the feeling of the overalls even more intense and I could feel on my chest that my wallet was still there.

After she had also paid for the other two overalls for Pia and Jonas, she gave me a plastic bag which I assumed contained my old trousers. Then we all left the store together. Outside, I thanked Jonas' mother once again. I would have never managed to buy overalls on my own. Overjoyed I went home and was glad not to meet any people I knew on the way.

When I arrived home I saw that my father was not at home, as expected. When I tried to unlock the door, I reached into the pockets of my new overalls and realized with shock that I did not have the key in my pocket. Until I remembered that the key had to be in my old trousers. So I opened the bag and was even more shocked: there were black trousers in it, but I had worn blue ones. I immediately realized that it must be the black overalls I had tried on in the store. How could that be, I had not enough money for those. Had I stolen them now without knowing it? Was it an accident? I knew what

stealing meant and that you don't do that. Even though I stole a few marks from my father every now and then, shoplifting was something else entirely.

There were people who claimed that my father did forbidden things even if I didn't know about it, but what did I know? At least that was the reason why other children were not allowed to play with me and I did not want to do bad or forbidden things. Once again, I began to have doubts about Jonas' mother. Had she set me up and would I be arrested and taken to prison in the next few days? It was too late to go back to the store, which had closed in the meantime. So I had to sort it out the next day. Preferably with Mrs. Bergmann, but I didn't even know where Jonas lived exactly. My head was almost bursting with worry and I also had to find my key. So I looked in the bag again and saw my old trousers with the key in them.

Finally I could unlock the door and walk into my room. There I spent the whole evening wearing the black and the blue/white overalls alternately. I just could not resist. Even though I probably had to return the black overalls. The only strange thing was that the black overalls also lacked the label.

At nine o'clock I was so tired that I went to bed. I had hidden the two overalls in the back of my closet. My head was in overdrive that night and I had dreamed of being chased by the police. Just before they caught me I woke up and I was soaked in sweat, but there was no one there to comfort me after such a nightmare. So I tried to fall asleep again, but I could hardly manage it, so I was exhausted when I had to leave for school.

My father had just come home from work and was still sitting in the kitchen before he would go to bed. He just looked at me with one eye and asked if I had slept well. I knew he didn't really care how I was doing and he did it just to keep up appearances. So I said. "Yes, everything's okay", then I grabbed two milk cups from the fridge and went to school.

I got there very early because I hadn't had breakfast. But Jonas was already in the schoolyard and so we sat down on a bench and talked. He was wearing his blue and white striped overalls again with the elastic in the back and I suddenly envied him for being allowed to have this great feeling all day at school, while my own overalls stayed hidden in the closet at home.

After a very short hello, Jonas wanted to know immediately from me how I came to the store alone and bought me some overalls. I then explained to him that the relationship with my father was not very good and that he would not go shopping with me and that my mother had run away a long time ago so that I would not even recognize her. Jonas was shocked by this and he could not imagine living without his mother. Which I believed from him immediately.

Then I told him that since he joined the class I was fascinated by his overalls without being able to explain it to him in detail. He looked at me in amazement and I had the feeling that he did not believe me. "And did you find what you were looking for yesterday?" he then asked me.

"Yes I think so, I find the overalls totally comfortable and I like them," I said to him.

"But why don't you wear them now, if you like them so much?"

"You don't believe me, do you? Honestly I'm sorry that I annoyed you the other day. Shall we be friends?" I then asked him. I felt so stupid that I had annoyed him together with the others.

"Well, we'll see! You know, I'm sorry about your parents too. My parents are actually quite OK. And I can always go to them with any problem. There's just one thing that's really starting to get on my nerves. It's these damn overalls," he said and I didn't understand what he was trying to tell me. Did he want to test me?

No, he told me that his parents would insist that he and his sister Pia always wear overalls. He also said he had almost no other pants, with very few exceptions like sports pants or something. He had been teased so often by other kids about them and couldn't understand why I would enjoy the feeling of being enveloped by overalls. He said it would only get on his nerves after a while and pinch and squeeze everywhere. His mother would always make the straps so tight that it would annoy him. He was not allowed to loosen them by himself. Then he showed me that the buckles on his trousers were sewn at a fixed position. When I saw that, I had no pity for him but found it fascinating and exciting, without telling him that.

We had completely overheard the school bell ringing and suddenly realized that the class had already started 10 minutes ago. When we came into the class, there was of course a huge scolding from the class teacher and an entry in the class register. But for me school was not that important. I wanted to try to make friends with Jonas. I was interested in his parents' rules and he seemed to have no problems with my father. Either his parents did not know the rumors or they did not believe them.

Anyway, I urgently had to talk to Jonas' mother again because of the black overalls. Then I would find out if she had inquired about me and would react differently than yesterday in the store.

During the next break I asked Jonas where he lived. I would like to talk to his mother again. Jonas explained the way and I realized that it was only four blocks from my home. But obviously we always took a different route from home to school. We decided to take the same route today.

After school we walked most of the way together. When we separated, I asked when his mother would come home so I could meet her. He didn't understand the question at first, but then I realized that his mother didn't work and that she was always at

home. But I was not supposed to come until 3:30 p.m. because he had to do homework before he could play.

At first I didn't even get that he had just invited me to play. I wanted to talk to his mother first and foremost. But this was fine with me, I wanted to get to know him better and make friends with him.

## The first visit to Jonas

After the exciting school day I went home and looked for food in the refrigerator and also did the household chores. Basically I wasn't too bad at school and almost always did my homework when I could. I didn't get any help from my father and I hardly played at home. On the one hand I hardly had any toys and on the other hand I tried not to be at home much, at least not when my father could be at home too.

Today I was lucky: my father was already gone when I came home from school. So I could do my homework undisturbed. Of course I put on the blue/white overalls and enjoyed the feeling of being restricted with every movement. After everything was done, I lay down on the bed with the overalls and thought about what Jonas had told me, that his parents would insist on him wearing overalls. It was really strange. What was it good for anyway? Sure, from my point of view it would be heaven on earth. I tried to imagine what it would be like if the Bergmanns were my parents. A few tears immediately flowed over my face. How I would like to have parents who loved me and supported me. A few stupid rules would surely not bother me.

At 3 pm I got up again and went to Jonas' home with the blue/white overalls on my body and the black overalls in the bag. I was there after less than 10 minutes and crept around the house first. It had a small but very well-kept front garden and a garage. I could not see the garden in the back of the property. On the mailbox I could read the name Bergmann. So I had to be right. Since I was still too early I did not dare to go to the door and ring the bell.

Suddenly a nearly brand new red Golf 2 drove into the yard in front of the garage and stopped for a short time, then the garage door opened by itself. My father had the same for his Mercedes but not everybody had that. I was still standing on the sidewalk watching what was happening and was not at all aware of how conspicuous I was standing there staring at the house.

When the engine of the Golf turned off, a man got out and came straight at me.

"Are you Rob?" he asked me and I was totally shocked; how did he know my name? And then then nickname that I liked best?

"Yes, that's what I'm called. And who are you?" I asked back and then realized what a stupid question that was. It had to be Jonas his father. Why else would he have driven into the garage.

"I am the father of Jonas. Hello, Rob. I think my wife is expecting you. Would you like to come along?" he asked me and smiled at me very friendly.

Why was I expected by Jonas' mother? I wanted to go to her to clear up the matter with the black overalls. But no matter, I would find out and so I went to Mr. Bergmann to shake his hand. He greeted me and then put his hand on my shoulder and led me through the garage into the garden behind it. The touch immediately gave me a

feeling of security again, I should really be careful and on guard, since I didn't really know Jonas' parents at all. But I missed such little things like a touch so much that I absorbed it together with the feeling of my overalls.

Right behind the house, a big garden with a large lawn, a swing and a big wooden climbing frame opened up. Even further back there was also a vegetable garden. But right beyond the house I was steered by Mr. Bergmann onto the terrace where his wife lay in a deck chair and read a book. When she saw me she jumped up immediately.

"Hello Walter, who did you bring along?" she said and gave her husband a kiss. Then she slipped her hand through my hair, which didn't really bother me since I craved for such gestures, even if it was actually a bit strange, and not age-appropriate.

"Hello Rob, have you finished your homework yet? You're early," she said and pointed to a chair at the table where I was supposed to sit.

"Yes, Mrs. Bergmann, I have already done all of it; it was easy today and went quickly" I told her.

She looked at me piercingly and I had the feeling she could x-ray my head and see if I was telling the truth. But I had nothing to worry about because I was truthful. And a moment later I could see that she believed me and put on her usual smile.

"Would you like something to drink Rob?" she asked and disappeared without an answer in the house. Her husband had also gone inside. Meanwhile I took a closer look at the garden. I had already seen the inviting playground. Now I also noticed two steel cables that were stretched at a height of a good two and a half meters from the terrace to behind the vegetable garden. On the terrace they were attached to the house and at the end of the garden there was a kind of frame. Was it a cable car for playing or did the family have a dog and it was a running line? But why then two cables?

Another question also went through my mind. Yesterday in the store Jonas' mother consistently addressed me with Robert and now she had already said Rob twice. Did Jonas talk to her that I don't like Robert so much?

Then Mrs. Bergmann came back with a tray in her hands and put it on the table. There were three colorful plastic cups upside down and two glass jugs on it.

"So Rob, we have water and apple juice here, what would you like?" she asked and took a cup and placed it on the table in front of me.

"Juice please!" I said.

Then she poured me the cup half-full with the apple juice.

I thanked her for it and took a small sip.

Afterwards Mrs. Bergmann looked at me expectantly and I became uncertain what she expected from me now. But then I dared to put the bag with the black overalls in it on the table.

"Um ... I ... um, I don't know how to say it. But something went wrong in the store yesterday," I said timidly and shyly.

"Why, what then? Don't you like both overalls anymore, you are even wearing one," said Mrs. Bergmann. And I hadn't noticed immediately that she had spoken in the plural.

"Well, when I arrived home and took my old trousers out of the bag, there were the black overalls in here," I pointed to the bag that was on the table. "And ... and I did not pay for it. I'm a decent boy - I don't steal," I said and the first tear ran down my face. "I know that other people think badly of me and my father. But I'm not like that" I said and sobbed heavily and the tears streamed down my face.

Thereupon Mrs. Bergmann jumped up, came to me, took me in her arms and pressed me very firmly. Like no one had ever done it with me before.

"Shh, shh, slow down Robert. I know that. You haven't done anything wrong. Please calm down again," she said and hugged me further. It felt so good that I began to cry even more. It took me almost three minutes to calm down again. Only when I was halfway calm did she release the hug and dried my face with a handkerchief.

"I'm very, very sorry that you had such foolish thoughts. It is my fault. I put the overalls in the bag and I paid for them for you too. I was hoping you would understand that and be happy about it. It was supposed to be a surprise. I'm sorry!"

I didn't understand anything anymore and was totally confused.

"That means I can keep those overalls too?" I asked incredulously.

"Yes of course, it's a gift, I thought you would understand it as such. I just couldn't tell you in the store because Jonas wanted the shoes," she said to me.

"But ... but ... I can't accept that. Now Jonas doesn't have the shoes and I have two pair of overalls. That is mean," I said.

"Oh Rob, that's really sweet of you to think that way and to have such a good sense of justice. I think that's really great. But Jonas wouldn't have gotten the shoes anyhow if you hadn't been there. Please do not worry about that. I am happy if I could make you happy and I would also like to support you in wearing overalls.

So slowly I got a load off my mind that everything had cleared up and I was no thief. Even though I could not really feel happy about the overalls yet, I still thanked her very politely.

"Is it true that Jonas has to wear overalls, even if he doesn't want to?" I then asked curiously after a break.

"What makes you think that? You like to wear them too, otherwise you wouldn't have been in that store yesterday," she said, evading my question.

"You know, I just wanted to try it out, out of curiosity, so to speak. I've never had overalls before," I answered truthfully.

"Well, you put them on now, so I assume you like them too."

"Yes, they are really comfortable," I said euphorically and I smiled again.

"Now you see, that's great and I feel justified that Pia and Jonas wear overalls so often. I find them so practical, especially for children," she said to me.

So Jonas had not lied and he really had to always wear overalls. Then of course it was a real pity that he didn't find them as comfortable as I did. And I also found it strange that Jonas, at the age of 12, was not yet allowed to decide what he would like to wear. Well, I could only decide to a limited extent myself, depending on what was in my closet. But I could decide between what was there and Jonas obviously could not.

I was a bit absorbed in my thoughts when Mrs. Bergmann spoke to me again.

"Robert, you mentioned your father a few times. Is he there for you when you need him? Does he check your homework, for example?" I was asked.

"Oh oh oh oh watch out Rob, watch out, this is not going in a good direction" I thought to myself immediately. I didn't like to talk about my father and certainly not to adults.

"Yes that's OK. He's just rarely around," I mixed the truth with my imagination.

But I could have guessed that this would not work with Mrs. Bergmann. I could see on her face that she did not believe me. "Why do all the adults always want to talk about my father? That's a load of crap," I thought to myself.

"I don't know, Robert, I'm a little worried. A child like you needs guidance," she said with a thoughtful expression.

This sentence from Mrs. Bergmann worried me again. I was not clear what she wanted. I only hoped that my father would not become a problem here again.

"My father has to work a lot and he doesn't always have time. Where is Jonas? May I play with him a bit more today?" I asked and hoped to end the subject.

Mrs. Bergmann thought for a moment and then smiled again with her warm and loving smile.

"All right, we'll talk another time. I'll see if Jonas has finished his homework yet. You wait here please" she said to me and disappeared into the house.

I thought it was a pity because I had hoped to see Jonas in his room, but Mrs. Bergmann's instructions to wait on the terrace were once again so clear that I didn't want to resist.

After a few minutes Pia, Jonas' little sister, came running up to the terrace and welcomed me and a little later Jonas arrived together with his mother.

"Hello Rob, cool that you came, I'm happy to see you" Jonas said to me.

"Mum, can we go and play?" Jonas asked his mother.

"Yes you can do that, but please only here in the garden and please take your sister with you. And I don't want to hear any arguments," she said to Jonas and Pia.

Then we walked together into the garden and had fun at the great playground construction. Jonas showed me everything and explained that his father had built it all by himself. Pia also played with us and it was no problem at all that she was more than 2 years younger than Jonas and me. Jonas told me what it was like to have a younger sister: on the one hand he always had someone to play with, but on the other hand she could be a pain in the ass. For me as an only child this was a completely different view of things.

We played for almost 2 hours and it gave me again a completely different, new and also nice feeling about the overalls. It was the first time I had moved so much in them and climbed on the scaffolding. In the meantime we went to the terrace every now and then to have a drink. Jonas' parents sat there the whole time, they talked and even made short phone calls, they had such a super modern wireless phone. Mr. Bergmann had also been with us once and gave Pia a push on the swing.

It was such a great afternoon, which I hadn't experienced for a long time. Even when I noticed that Jonas and his parents were constantly watching us, which normally always made me nervous when I was being watched, it gave me a good feeling of security and safety.

It must have been around 6 pm when we were called back to the terrace.

"Please come children, we want to have dinner." yelled Mr. Bergmann loudly through the garden.

I was really hungry but I was ashamed to sit down at the family table with the Bergmanns without having talked about it before. I knew that it was common with other families to eat together in the evening. But I didn't belong to this family even though I wished for nothing more than that after this great afternoon together with Jonas and Pia.

When I was at the terrace I wanted to shake Jonas' hand and said, "Hey Jonas, it was a great afternoon with you guys, it was a lot of fun. I will go home now." And waved with a happy "Bye!" to Mrs. Bergmann, who was standing at the table and put something

down. I slowly turned towards the garage backdoor, where I had also come in through the garage in the afternoon.

"Robert, stop" said Mrs. Bergmann unexpectedly sharply and I stopped more out of shock. Then I looked at her questioningly.

"You can't just leave like that, the food is for you as well. And besides, the garage is already closed, you can't get through there anyway," she said in a more friendly but still decisive manner.

"But I can't just eat with you?" I answered her.

"Why not? I've already prepared everything for you too."

I walked a few steps back towards the terrace, "but ... I don't want to be a burden on you, you've done far too much for me," I said as I saw the bag of overalls lying on the terrace, which I had almost forgotten.

"Come here Rob," she said to me.

"And you two go with dad to wash your hands, off you go," she said to Jonas and Pia, who then disappeared into the apartment with their father.

I went to Mrs. Bergmann and she took me in her arms again and hugged me.

"I assume that your father won't be home tonight, right?" she asked me while still holding me lightly in her arms.

I nodded my head and looked up at her.

"You see, I was watching you this afternoon and you need a little more family than you have right now. We can't solve that easily, but dinner at our place is the least I can give you. So I insist that you eat with us tonight. OK!?" she said and gave me another hug before she let me go.

I could not disagree and she was right: I was not expected at home.

"OK come, we'll wash your hands too" she said and took me by the hand like a little child and led me into the apartment. I was too perplexed to protest and it didn't feel so wrong, I didn't know the house and didn't know where to go. She led me through the living room into the hallway and to the very front, where next to the front door was a guest toilet.

When we arrived there I wanted to let go of her hand but she didn't let go of me and with her other hand she opened the door and led me inside. Only there she let go of my hand and turned on the water for me. It seemed totally strange to me, did she want to wash my hands like a toddler?

I looked at her questioningly and then said, "I can wash my own hands!"

She smiled at me again, very warm and nice, "Yes, I believe you, but after playing so intensively on the climbing frame, something more is needed and I want to be on the safe side. Look at your hands, they are all green," she said and took the piece of soap in her hand and then my right hand. Then she held it under the water and then washed it, followed by a thorough treatment with a brush and then the same with my left hand. It seemed totally stupid on the one hand but on the other hand it was quite pleasant. I had no responsibility, I just had to put my hands into the sink and nobody had taken care of me so intensively for a long time. When she was done, I was supposed to keep my wet hands on the side in the sink until she had washed her hands herself. Then she took the towel and dried my hands thoroughly.

After this quite strange experience came the next one. She grabbed one of the straps of the overalls behind my back and then led me, so that I couldn't run away or get ahead, the way back to the terrace. Thus the overalls gave me a new feeling again. It was a mixture of loss of control, dependence and deep security.

But on the terrace she let go of me immediately and I could see Jonas and Pia were just sitting down at the table. But there was something strange about it. There were only two of the normal metal patio chairs at the table. Jonas sat down on a blue lacquered wooden chair, which consisted of a small backrest, a height-adjustable seat and a height-adjustable board for the feet. It was not a real child's or baby's chair, but it was something like that. Pia sat on the same model in red, only that with hers the two boards were set much higher. She had to climb on the lower board before she could sit down. But she could do that all by herself and was probably used to it. When she sat down, she was just as tall as her brother.

Which must have been very practical for her to sit in such a high position. Jonas also sat much higher than on a normal adult chair. It was only now that I realized that there was another one of these chairs in green. This one obviously had to be for me. But I did not make any direct movements to sit on it.

"Shall I help you Rob?" said Mr. Bergmann who was still standing next to the table and immediately, without waiting for an answer, grabbed me under my arms and lifted me onto the chair. I came to sit very comfortably, my feet were flat on the footrest and the seat was so short and high that I sat on the chair with perfectly angled legs and could lean my back against the backrest. Now I understood the advantage of these chairs.

Then Jonas leaned very far forward to his feet and strapped them to the board with Velcro and loops. After that he straightened up again and first grabbed between his legs and took out a short belt with a kind of buckle, like a seatbelt in modern cars. He held this buckle with one hand and with the other hand he grabbed to the side of the backrest, where a belt with a counterpart was hanging, which he put into the buckle in front of his belly. The same happened on the other side. But he had some difficulties with the last piece, because the belt that was now tightened around his belly was quite tight. But after some pulling he had put all three ends together and I heard a clacking

sound when it clicked into place. Now he could not get up from the chair or bend down to his feet. He was sitting very straight.

Then I looked at Pia, who was also busy locking the straps around her belly. Meanwhile her father strapped her feet to the lower board. When he was done with that, he looked at me expectantly. And I risked a look at my chair, which had the same loops, straps and buckles.

"I guess you are not familiar with this yet, Rob. But that is one of our house rules. "No fidgeting while eating!" it means. I'll help you fasten your seatbelt. It's not complicated," Mr. Bergmann said to me and immediately grabbed the lower belt between my legs. Then the other two were inserted together from the side into the buckle. He showed me exactly how to do it, because next time I should do it alone, I was told. When everything was connected, my belts were still quite loose, but Mr. Bergmann changed that immediately. The belts could be pulled tighter behind the backrest. After that I could not lift my bottom from the chair and I could not bend forward even a little. The belt between my legs very effectively prevented me from pushing my bottom forward.

When my feet were strapped to the board by Mr. Bergmann, I again had the feeling of loss of control and dependence, even though it felt quite good on the whole, except for the strap between my legs.

Finally, Mr. Bergmann pushed all three of us children closer to the table with our chairs. Even this was no longer possible for us because we no longer had any contact with the floor. The food itself was great, we children talked about our experiences of the day and Mr. and Mrs. Bergmann asked us about school and how it was like there. Sitting on the chairs was not bad and the seat belts clearly served their purpose. I had never sat on a chair for so long and so quietly. Nevertheless I felt totally comfortable at dinner with the Bergmanns. Towards the end I realized that I had never experienced and probably would never experience such a feeling of security and sociability at home as there was in this family.

When we were finished eating, Mrs. Bergmann looked at the clock and said, "Oh dear, it's already after 6:30 p.m., children you should be in bed already. Walter please put Pia and Jonas to bed. I will bring Robert home. We can clean up afterwards," she presented her plan.

My heart immediately started racing again and my serenity was gone. Why did Mrs. Bergmann want to take me home? I knew the way myself and it was less than 10 minutes on foot. I didn't have much more time to think though; Mr. Bergmann got up immediately and pulled our three chairs a good distance back from the table and immediately began to unstrap Pia's feet first and then help her to unbuckle her seatbelt. At least that was what I thought and so I wanted to unbuckle myself and get up. But when I tried to open the buckle, I noticed that it was stuck. The red button could not be pushed in at all. I tried again but it didn't help: it was stuck. I thought

maybe there was a trick and so I looked at Jonas how he opened the seatbelt. But Jonas didn't even try, instead he watched with a slight grin. "You don't have to try that, mom and dad are really serious about the rule," he said to me.

"Yes, Rob, Jonas is absolutely right. You can only get up from mealtime with permission," Jonas' mother said and from where she was standing next to Jonas in his chair. She had a kind of pen or key in her hand. She put it into a hole, which was in the middle of the red button on Jonas' belt buckle. The two side straps jumped out of the buckle. Only then did Jonas become active and loosened the loops on his feet himself and stood up from his chair.

Pia had also got up from her chair in the meantime and stood next to her father who held her by the hand. With the other hand, Mr. Bergmann grabbed Jonas' left hand. He said goodbye to me with his right hand where I was still sitting on my chair. "Good night Rob. It was a great afternoon with you, I would be very happy if we could do this again," he said to me.

"Good night Jonas, I thought it was great too. I'll see you tomorrow at school." I said and immediately Jonas was gently pulled away by his father and all three of them went into the house. Mrs. Bergmann stayed next to me.

Everything happened so fast that I hardly noticed it and I had to collect myself and organize my thoughts and feelings. In the process, Mrs. Bergmann shifted the chair on which Jonas had been sitting a little to my right and sat down diagonally opposite me, but so close that she could touch me. She could not sit on the chair as comfortably as Jonas, but for a moment it would work. Then she grabbed my hands from my lap and held them gently.

"Robert, I noticed that you behaved differently at the end of dinner, what's wrong? Is something bothering you?" she asked, looking me straight in the eye.

This woman obviously was able to read me like an open book. But I didn't want to tell her now that I was jealous of her great family just because I didn't have one. I had been able to deal with it for a long time and would continue to do so. So I said, "Nah, everybody's okay. Can I get up now? I should get going."

She just nodded at first. But after a pause she continued, "Did you like it here?"

Then I got a big smile on my face and nodded vehemently, "Oh yes, it was great. I also have to thank you for the food. That was very nice of you."

"That's all right, you're welcome at our place. You know I was watching you this afternoon. But I also made some inquiries about your father together with my husband, because you told me some things about him that kept bugging me," she said, squeezing my hands very lightly so that it could just be felt.

What she said must have changed my facial expression dramatically. I had another totally hollow feeling in my stomach even though I had just eaten and it felt like the

belt holding me in the chair was tightening. Would my father ruin the friendship I was trying to build up with Jonas this time again? A big tear came immediately in my eyes.

"Shh ... Shh ... stay calm Robert. I just want to know a few things from your point of view, nothing bad. You know, it's always better when you look at all sides. Hmm..." she said and I couldn't look into her eyes anymore.

"What were you told when you inquired about my father?" I then wanted to know. Whether it was the same stories that others told about him being a criminal. But that was not true. I may not have liked my father, but he was still my father and I didn't want others to always portray him that way.

"Robert, I don't care what people say, I care what you say. Do you know what your father does for a living?" she asked objectively.

"Yes, he is a manager?" I said truthfully.

"OK, and do you know where he works?"

"No, not exactly. But it can't be far by car. Others say it's at the end of Walter Koch street, out in the woods," I said, and I had really only heard rumors about it.

"You've never been there?"

"No, dad says it's only for adults and I'm not allowed to go there."

"Okay, that's right, he's absolutely right," said Mrs. Bergmann, looking somewhat relieved. As if she liked that I had never been there.

"And you know what they call that place where he works?"

"He always calls it the club. I think it is a kind of disco but only for adults. The parents who don't want me to play with their children, they say Bro ... Brothe or something."

"Do you mean brothel?" she asked.

"Maybe that's what it's called."

"And do you know what that word means?"

I shook my head and felt stupid because I didn't know the word. But I didn't care what the others called it either.

"Well Robert, it's late and I'll take you home now," she said suddenly and stood up and let go of my hands that she had been holding all along.

"But I can go alone, it's not far," I said to her.

"But I stand on it and there won't be a discussion on that. It's almost 7 p.m. and I don't want you to walk outside alone at such a time," she said determinedly and started to open the belt of the chair. But when I could finally get up again, there was still an important question on my mind.

"What do you think, may I come again and play with Jonas?" I asked anxiously.

"Do you have any after-school commitments? Soccer club, music lessons or tutoring?" she asked me unexpectedly and I shook my head again.

"OK, and after school you're not expected home by anyone?" was the next question and I didn't understand what she was getting at. But I kept on shaking my head.

"So nobody checks your homework and you do it by yourself anyway?" She sounded like she didn't believe it or at least didn't understand it.

"Yes, I have to. If I have bad grades and I get a written reprimand from school for not doing my homework, my father will get angry," I told her.

"But when do you meet your father when he's not home in the afternoon and evening?"

"He usually comes home in the morning when I have to go to school and then we usually see each other in the kitchen for a few minutes."

"Okay, I understand that," she said and gave me her hand, as if she wanted to hold my hand again, like when we went to wash them. After a short hesitation I understood what was expected of me and I gave her my hand. It was unusual but not unpleasant. So we walked together through the house to the front door and then towards my home.

Shortly after we left the house she started talking again. "Since you have nothing else to do tomorrow after school, I would suggest that you and Jonas come back to our place right after school. What do you think about that?"

"Oh, yeah, that's great. I would like that very much," I said and skipped a few steps. Mrs. Bergmann kept holding my hand, although there were some jerks. But she only looked at me with a smile and was happy about my joyful reaction.

"Fine then you both can do your homework and play again afterwards. Isn't that something!"

"Yes, I am happy, thank you very much Mrs. Bergmann." I said.

The rest of the way I was asked a bit more about my everyday life, but nothing that seemed important to me. She brought me directly to the front door and only there she let go of my hand. I was still overjoyed to play again with Jonas the very next day. Then I took the key out of the pocket of my overalls and unlocked the door. Then Mrs. Bergmann handed me the bag with the black overalls in it, for which I thanked her again very much. Then I went to my room and was alone again.

I let myself fall on my bed and once again felt intensely the feeling of the overalls. Then I started to think about the day. Some things at home with Jonas were strange, the chairs with the belts and the washing of hands by Mrs. Bergmann. Then Pia and Jonas

were led by their father on the hand into their rooms or into the bathroom. Why, surely the two of them could get ready for bed themselves. I had to do that as well. But then I imagined how Jonas and Pia were put to bed by their parents and perhaps even had a story read to them. In my pale memory I could remember how my mother had done it with me long ago. I missed it so much and everything about that afternoon suddenly reminded me of it.

Lost in thought, I pulled my legs together and almost automatically pulled the bedcover halfway up and crossed my arms in front of the bib of my overalls. The feeling of the hugging overalls intensified and a hot tear rolled out of my eyes. I missed my mother so much. After a short time I must have fallen asleep.

### Overalls are obligated

I heard a rumbling in the house, still very sleepy. Thereupon I jumped up. What was the matter? Where was I? And what was holding me? I threw the blanket aside and realized that I was in bed and still wearing the blue and white overalls. What had happened? And what time was it?

My head slowly woke up and the memories came back. I must not have undressed yesterday, but fallen asleep right away. I looked at my alarm clock which was not on. But I quickly realized that it was only a little after 7 o'clock and that I would still have enough time to take a shower and be at school on time. The banging had to come from the kitchen, which meant that my father was already home.

"Shit, he shouldn't see me in my overalls," I thought and jumped up to take them off and stuff them in the closet along with the bag with the black overalls. Then I went to the bathroom and got ready for the day. I put on a fresh t-shirt and my blue jeans from the day before. In the kitchen I had a short but insignificant conversation with my father and then I went to school.

Since it was still early enough I went a slightly different route and as expected I met Jonas a few streets away, almost at the place where we had split up the day before after school.

"Hello Jonas," I shouted happily.

"Hi Rob, that's really cool that you're allowed to come to our house after school today" he was happy to see me too.

"That's really good, isn't it? I'm happy too, it was really great at your house," I replied.

"What did your father say about it?" he asked me.

"Why do you ask that, what should he say? Nothing, of course" I said quite naturally.

"Didn't you ask him?"

"Nope, he's not interested anyway," I answered him.

"Okay, I didn't know that. You can just do whatever you want?" Jonas asked astonished.

"Well, not *everything*, but I have a lot of freedom." I remained vague, because I knew that Jonas had to follow much stricter rules at home with his parents than I did.

"And did you get home on time yesterday?" he then asked.

"Well, what do you mean by on time? Your mom was kind enough to bring me home," I said.

"Oh, well then. But when do you have to be in bed? I mean when Pia and I went to the bathroom yesterday, it was already half past six and I heard my mom come back, when I was ready in the bathroom," said Jonas.

"When do you have to go to bed?" I asked the counter question.

"At seven o'clock the light must be off. Mom and Dad are really strict," said Jonas a bit downhearted.

"Oh but so early! It's still light then," I said somewhat surprised.

"Well, it's always dark in our bedroom and it's actually my sister's bedtime but my mom always says she wants to treat us equally so I have to be in bed at 7. Stupid no! And with you?" he wanted to know.

"Well, in summer my father says I should be home before it gets dark. So I was home more than early enough. I go to bed when I am tired," I told him.

"What, that's cool. You can stay up as long as you want?" he asked enthusiastically.

"Well, I'll put it this way, it's not checked because my father isn't there in the evening. But if I get a C or lower in school, then I get into real trouble. So I can't go to bed too late either," I told him.

We soon arrived at school and a normal morning at school began. When school was finally over, we both went home to Jonas together. I had left my overalls at home because I didn't dare to wear them at school. When I looked at Jonas while walking, I already missed the feeling of the overalls, even though I had them only since 2 days. Jonas wore, as very often at school, blue and white striped overalls. As I knew these were cheaper, which could be a reason for that.

When we arrived at Jonas' house he pressed the bell at the front door, which surprised me. I had a key to our house for many years. During the first years my father wanted me to wear it with a ribbon around my neck, which was always totally embarrassing and I hid the key under my shirt.

After a few moments Mrs. Bergmann opened the door for us.

"Hello mom, we are here!" said Jonas happily.

"Hello children, there you are," she echoed and stroked Jonas over the head and then gave him a kiss on the cheek, which was obviously a bit embarrassing for him.

"Good day Mrs. Bergmann." I then greeted Jonas his mother. After which she also ran her hand through my hair and then looked at me judgmentally from top to bottom. I couldn't really imagine what the reason was, but something must have displeased her. But she only said "come on in, kids."

Then we went into the hallway and Mrs. Bergmann took the satchel from both of us and put them on the ground in the cloakroom.

"OK Jonas, you go in the back to the bathroom to wash your hands and Robert you go right here" she said and opened the door to the guest toilet for me. Jonas disappeared inside the house and I went into the bathroom to wash my hands.

"Robert! Please wash your hands thoroughly and properly and then wait here; I will be right back. OK!?" Mrs. Bergmann then said to me, while pointing from me to the washing basin. It was only at that moment that I realized that Jonas his mother always addressed me with my full name whenever she said something important or very serious to me. When I was hanging out with her during petty or nice conversations, she addressed me with Rob. So I followed her instructions exactly and washed my hands much longer and more thoroughly than I would normally do. I was also worried why Mrs. Bergmann had looked at me like that when she greeted me. The instructions were also very clear and precise.

When I had finished I dried my hands thoroughly, left the bathroom and waited in the hallway in front of the bathroom for Mrs. Bergmann. It lasted a little while longer and then she came back and looked at me very strangely again. The days before she was usually very nice or thoughtful towards me, but today I had the feeling that she looked at me differently.

"OK Robert, I can see you still have some deficits in obedience. Although I have to admit that you have been brought up to be surprisingly polite and courteous," she told me when she came to meet me again. I was a bit shocked by the statement, had I done something wrong? I also found the words she used unfamiliar. I had followed her instructions exactly. But I didn't want to do anything wrong, I wanted first and foremost to win Jonas as a friend and I was used to making a good impression on the parents of friends. I had failed too often.

"Did I do something wrong, Mrs. Bergmann? I'm sorry" I said and did not dare to look her in the eyes.

"Nothing I didn't expect," she said and put her hand under my chin and lifted my head back up so that I had to look her in the eyes. But she smiled again, as warm and nice as she usually did.

"You know, Robert, we have some house rules here in our family. Especially for you kids. You can't know all of them yet, but we'll teach you bit by bit, that's no problem. The most important one is that you must always follow the instructions of me or my husband," she said and let go of my chin. I could understand this instruction, it was the same at home, only that my father didn't give me so many instructions. He was more concerned with the results, like school grades, for example. But Mrs. Bergmann had even more to say.

"I told you in the bathroom that you should stay there ... and not to wait outside. That may be a small difference for you, but we count such precision as part of the discipline of our children. But you'll learn that, now let's see if your hands are clean."

I suddenly felt so strange, Mrs. Bergmann was strict from the beginning, even in the store, which didn't bother me. But now I felt treated like a little child who had not yet learned anything in his life. But I was already 12 years old and other adults always said that I was so mature since my mother left. Nevertheless, I stretched out my hands and Mrs. Bergmann controlled the cleanliness.

"OK that's pretty neat." She then said and brushed her hand through my hair again. Which was a bit embarrassing for me on the one hand, but somehow I also found it great. It was a loving gesture that I wasn't used to feeling at home anymore.

Then she stuck out her hand again as she did the night before and this time I knew immediately what was required of me and so I took the hand of Mrs. Bergmann and she led me along the corridor around a bend. She said to me, "Robert, another rule of the house says that there is no running in this house. The garden is there for running. Please remember that."

We passed some doors that had funny tags, with decorations and figures. The first one had Jonas' name on it, diagonally opposite was a sign with some dancing "Z"s on it, like in comics or cartoons. This must have been the parents' bedroom, I guessed. The next door was labeled with Pia. Opposite to it, it read mom and dad on the door. Now I was confused, the first room on the side must mean something else. At the end of the corridor the bathroom was visible. And next to Pia's room was a door without any inscription. It was exactly this door that Mrs. Bergmann and I were heading for.

The interior looked something like the cleaning room at our house, where our cleaning and washing woman had her empire when she came to us twice a week and did the laundry for me and Dad and ironed and cleaned the house. Only here there were more cupboards on the walls. There was also an ironing board but I could not see a washing machine. Mrs. Bergmann closed the door and let go of my hand again.

"So Robert, there is one more rule. Which I thought you had already recognized and understood. Here with us children always wear overalls. That's no problem for you, is it?" she asked somewhat provocatively. In fact I had no problem wearing overalls here and I knew that Jonas had to wear them often, even if he didn't like it as much as I did.

But that it was such a strict rule, I really didn't expect. Besides, I did have a problem with wearing my overalls to school. But I did not dare to say that. So I shook my head and already suspected what was coming.

"Well then please take off your pants, I'll give you one of Jonas'. That should fit about right," she said as I had almost expected. But I could live with that: I had already foregone the great feeling of the overalls all morning and I didn't expect to get it back before I came home. So I happily took off my pants. She took them out of my hand and put them over the ironing board. Then she held one of Jonas' blue and white striped overalls in front of me to step into. After I got in, Mrs. Bergmann pulled the overalls up and put the straps over my shoulders, just like in the store two days before. When she adjusted the buckles on the straps I could see that they were different buckles than my own overalls or the ones on the overalls that Jonas wore to school, with the non-adjustable straps. They were put into a bigger counterpart at the bib and not simply hooked on buttons.

At first I found the setting that Mrs. Bergmann had chosen a bit too tight, even though I liked the tight feeling of the overalls. But it was almost uncomfortable between the legs. I considered whether I should protest, but then I thought I could loosen the straps a bit in an unobserved moment, since these obviously were adjustable. So I allowed her to close the side buttons and it was much more comfortable: the firm elastic in the back stretched the bib pleasantly over my stomach and chest.

When Mrs. Bergmann had finished, she turned me once around by the armpit and was satisfied with the fit. Then she gave me a light slap with her flat hand on my bottom.

"All done Rob, now we can go out to eat" she said cheerfully.

The slap on my bottom confused me, it didn't hurt. But I didn't know at first what it was all about. I wasn't punished by my father very often, but when I was, I could get ready for a good "assful". For less severe offences, he would take his flat hand, but for larger ones, he would take his belt or a cane. In this respect, a hand on my butt usually meant no good. But after my first shock and the way she touched it, I looked at Mrs. Bergmann and she smiled so nicely again, so that something else must have been meant. I slowly remembered from my mother, that such a gesture could also be meant affectionately. So I was glad that Mrs. Bergmann had nothing else to criticize about me. When we left the room, I felt in my back that she had grabbed me by the straps again to guide me through the apartment. But this time it felt different. There had to be some kind of handle or loop on the part where the straps were joined. It gave the overalls an even more intense feeling of hugging and also a certain control that was exerted on me. It felt exciting.

When we arrived in the dining room, I could see that Pia and Jonas were already sitting in their colorful chairs and that their straps were holding them there. I knew that they could not get up alone. When I was led to the free chair, my inner excitement became stronger. I too would sit there soon without being able to get up.

To get into the chair, Mrs. Bergmann almost pulled me onto the chair with the handle in my back so that I almost didn't have to do anything. Then I was told that I should please fasten my own seat belt, while Mrs. Bergmann went into the kitchen to serve the food. Like Jonas the night before, I had started with the feet, which was not so easy. On the one hand the straps of the overalls pulled very much on my shoulders and I didn't know how to use the loops for my feet. But Jonas gave me some good tips so that I finally made it. The three straps for around my waist were not that difficult, just a little tight, but that was solvable.

Then we three children had lunch together with Mrs. Bergmann. This was totally unusual for me. I never ate anything warm at lunch. It was actually a very simple meal. Boiled potatoes, a piece of meat and plenty of vegetables. I didn't like the vegetables very much, but Mrs. Bergmann set the portions and she also emphasized how important it was to her that we all ate our vegetables. Then there was a small bowl of jelly for each of us, which of course I liked very much.

When we finished eating, Mrs. Bergmann cleared the dishes again and Jonas asked his mother, "Mummy can I show Rob my room?"

I thought I would never get to see them, I was of course also very interested in how Jonas' room looked like.

"No Jonas, first we do our homework. You know that very well," said Mrs. Bergmann.

"Yes mom", said Jonas and let his head hang a little and showed his disappointment.

Then the dishes were cleared and the table wiped clean, and Mrs. Bergmann pulled back Jonas' and Pia's chair a little and opened both their belt buckles. But not with me though, which made me a little nervous again. Of course, I was reminded that I could not get up and was certainly not allowed to.

"Jonas, you carry your own chair into your room." Mrs. Bergmann then said to Jonas and then took Pia by the hand, dragged Pia's chair behind her with the other and all three of them went into the hallway towards the children's rooms and I stayed back alone. Which caused a strong tingling and discomfort in me.

Then I heard Mrs. Bergmann say to Jonas from the hallway, "You wait here obediently, I'll take you to the toilet first. But before that I'll install Pia in her room.

"I don't have to go yet, mummy," Jonas said.

"It doesn't matter, I want no interruptions during homework. You know that."

I couldn't figure out the conversation, but Pia was obviously strapped back in her chair for her homework. Which was probably what Jonas and I had to face, although I was still strapped in anyway. But why didn't Jonas go to the toilet alone? Why should he wait, and where? Probably in his room. This consideration made me realize that I slowly had to go to the toilet myself.

But I had to wait for that and indeed ask for it, because I couldn't leave here alone. That was a strange feeling. I always just went to the toilet when I had to, I never had to ask anybody for that. Except maybe at school when it was during the lessons. But not otherwise.

While waiting for Mrs. Bergmann, whom I could still hear from the hallway, I asked myself if I were to do my homework here in the dining room. I had hoped to do my homework together with Jonas, ideally in his room. But since his mother had ruled out that I could see his room before we did our homework, it was unlikely that this would happen. I did not know such a family life and so I thought that it was normal that the children had to do their homework individually. I had to do that at home as well. So why should it not be normal.

After what felt like an eternity Mrs. Bergmann came back to me with my satchel in her hand and put it next to my chair. "Robert, I think you should also go to the bathroom before you start your work." she said and I nodded in agreement and was secretly happy not to have to ask for it myself.

"Another of our rules is that you should do your homework undisturbed and without interruption," she continued, unlocking my belt on the chair with her key.

I was able to get up and she immediately took my hand again and led me into the corridor towards the bathroom. I wondered why I shouldn't use the guest toilet again like I used to wash my hands. We first passed Jonas' room and the door was open and I had a very short look into Jonas' room. He sat at a desk on his chair and was already absorbed in his tasks. With Pia it looked almost the same.

Then we arrived at the bathroom and Mrs. Bergmann only let go of my hand after she closed the door. My heart began to beat. Why had she closed the door from inside and was with me in the bathroom? I wasn't a toddler, I could go to the toilet by myself. Having my hands washed or having them checked afterwards was one thing, even though I thought it was totally over the top. But I really didn't need any help when I was peeing, I thought to myself and looked at Mrs. Bergmann in horror and questioning without being able to say anything about the situation.

Mrs. Bergmann however remained completely calm and pulled out a stool and sat down next to the bathtub, thus blocking the door as well. Then her head was at the same level as mine and she looked at me seriously but with a warm and understanding expression.

"Robert, there's another important house rule that I'll have to explain to you in more detail. She said and smiled warmly at me. Whereupon my pulse did not get any lower.

"I am a follower of the motto 'Trust is good but checking is better'. This applies especially to cleanliness and hygiene. I'm sure you noticed that when you washed your hands. You don't have to think that I only control this with you. Pia and Jonas also have to show their hands or in special cases I help them, like I did with you yesterday," she

said and looked at me attentively. I just nodded my head slightly and tried to find out what she was getting at.

"That's good that you understand. Hygiene includes especially the visit to the toilet and that's why I am always there when one of you has to go to the toilet. So I can see if everything is right and I can also help. You understand that too!

I didn't know what to say to that, she really wanted to watch me if I can go to the toilet properly? That could not be true. I had been going to the toilet alone since I was 6 years old and I certainly didn't need anyone to check up on me. I liked Mrs. Bergmann very much and she has always given me a good and... yes, I must admit it, also a secure feeling. But she was still only the mother of a classmate. I was of the opinion that this would go too far.

"But ... but ... but ... I ... I ... I ... I can do it all by myself" was the only thing I could stammer out. Then she reached out to put her hand on my shoulder. But I took a step back, I didn't really know why I was to be honest, because up to that point, Mrs. Bergmann's touches had always been so good for me and I had enjoyed them.

"Please come here Robert, everything is fine. Of course I also want you to feel comfortable. Believe me, it is good for you. You trust me, don't you?!" she said and then spread her arms as if she wanted to take me in her arms.

I was totally overwhelmed and my feelings went on a rollercoaster. Of course I trusted her - would I be there otherwise? Even after initial caution, Mrs. Bergmann had never deceived me or let me down. But this went too far now, didn't it? It were to be good for me and I should feel good!

Mrs. Bergmann looked at me for a moment with open arms and I had to make a difficult decision, as so often in my life and I hated that. But once again Mrs. Bergmann radiated such warmth and confidence that I couldn't help but approach her. As soon as she could grab me, she hugged me tightly and said softly into my ear, "Come on, the faster we start, the faster it's over. Besides, it's only the first time it's weird for you. You'll get used to how we do things here. Okay?"

"Is this really necessary? What if I don't want you to watch me?" I asked carefully in an anxious voice. Then she released the hug and looked at me again.

"Well Robert, it's a house rule with us and it wouldn't be fair to Jonas and Pia. It is always important to me to treat all children equally. But of course I am not your mother. Therefore I want you to understand and accept it" she explained to me calmly and clearly.

"But would that mean that I'm not allowed to visit you anymore?" I ask with slightly moist eyes. Because I wanted to be allowed to continue playing with Jonas.

"Let me put it this way, at least you're not allowed to go to the toilet with us anymore. If you had to walk all the way home for that, that would be a big problem. Of course I

could also discuss it with your father," she said and gave me an even deeper shock. That would have been even more embarrassing and I would have lost control over the decision completely.

As I had to think for a moment, Ms. Bergmann hugged me again and whispered in my ear once more. "That's really not bad, you're just not used to it. Come on, let's get started. You'll see."

Then she released the hug again and looked at me questioningly. So I had a choice in this question. But I hated these decisions about my life, couldn't anyone help me?

I didn't want to lose my beginning friendship with Jonas because of such a stupid thing. Besides, if I had refused now, there would still have been the danger that Mrs. Bergmann would simply have asked my father. Then he would make the decision for me, which I really wanted even less. So I nodded my head slightly and said very quietly, "If it really has to be!"

"Yes, but you'll see, it's really not that bad," she said and got up from her stool. She put one hand on my shoulder and reached into her pocket with the other to get out this strange key that was needed to open the straps on the chairs. She fiddled with it for a little moment with the buckles of the overalls I was wearing to open them.

It was only then that I realized that I had been locked in these overalls the whole time since she had put them on me. Then all the thoughts I had just thought about were gone and another strange feeling came up in me. But after the straps of the overalls were opened and taken off my shoulders, I had no chance to think about my feelings anymore. I had to concentrate on what was happening to me. Mrs. Bergmann took off my overalls completely and put them over the edge of the bathtub. Then she grabbed my underpants with two fingers in the waistband and pulled them down to my knees. My face became very warm and I instinctively took a hand between my crotch. But Mrs. Bergmann didn't let herself be disturbed and pushed me gently to the toilet and pressed me down slightly. So I sat down as if by remote control and Mrs. Bergmann let go of me while I sat down on the toilet bowl.

I was still like hypnotized and just sat frozen with my hand in my crotch, while Mrs. Bergmann sat down on the stool again and did not let me out of her sight, which did not lessen the embarrassment of the situation. But after a few moments, I could grasp a clear thought again and saw the only way out was to get it over with. So I tried to concentrate on finally peeing, which I had to do very urgently anyway. But under observation it was not as easy as I thought.

As you would expect, Mrs. Bergmann showed that she could read me like an open book and said, "Just relax, kid, there's nothing to be embarrassed about."

"But ... uh ... uhhh ... I do it normally without being observed." I stuttered again.

"Yes, I can see that, and that's why I think it's so important to support you in this," she said, pointing her finger at my underpants.

I looked down briefly and knew immediately what she meant, there was a light brown trace in them. All of a sudden my face became even hotter and I must have been glowing like an overripe tomato, so embarrassing was this remark and I couldn't look at Mrs. Bergmann anymore but I couldn't pee like that either.

Our housekeeper, or one of the women my father used to have, always gave me these white fine-rib underwear. It was almost impossible not to have a light brown trace in them at the end of the day. The paper at school was so hard that you couldn't wipe yourself properly with it anyway. At home I never got in trouble for that or a remark from our housekeeper. I was sure she knew, but she never said anything.

While I was still deep in my thoughts, Mrs. Bergmann had got up and suddenly stood beside me. At first I thought I was going to get in trouble because of the dirty underpants, but I suddenly felt Mrs. Bergmann running her hand through my hair. But when I looked up to her, it was immediately clear to me that this was not the case.

"It's all right, I'll take care of it, give it to me; I'm sure one of Jonas's will fit you, too," she then said and reached for my underpants. I then had to lift my legs and Mrs. Bergmann took them off completely and left the bathroom with them. After this shock and the loving touch on my head I relaxed quite quickly and could finally pee. It went on for so long that it was still going when Mrs. Bergmann had already returned with fresh underpants in her hand. It seemed to be a very similar model. But she just put the underpants on the overalls and closed the door again.

"Finished by now?" she then asked when it finally had stopped splashing in the bowl. I nodded slightly and wasn't sure what she wanted me to do now. Obviously I shouldn't just put on the new underpants like I would have done if I had been alone.

"OK, well then please stand up and hold your shirt up to your chest with both hands. I will clean you now." she gave me instructions in her usual manner.

It was a totally strange and unfamiliar situation, but I followed the instruction for lack of alternatives and because it had until now always worked out well for me when Mrs. Bergmann asked me to do something.

Then I was first dabbed dry with paper at the front and then I had to bend forward and the back was also wiped with dry toilet paper. She didn't show it to me separately, but I could see that the paper was also clearly dirty, although I hadn't done a number two. Of course I was very embarrassed about this and unfortunately it also showed that she was right with her opinion about control.

After that I was allowed to stand up straight again and had to wait until she had prepared a washcloth with warm water and soap. With this I was then thoroughly

washed in the entire area that the underpants covered. I had to hold my shirt up the whole time and was also warned once to hold it higher.

The whole situation was rather embarrassing for me. I never thought I would be treated like this again when I was already 12 years old. But the longer it lasted, the less bad it was. Mrs. Bergmann was very experienced, and I realized that she would probably do the same every day with Pia and Jonas. And suddenly I thought again how nice it must be for Jonas to have a mother who took such good care of him and I was suddenly so happy to have gotten a little bit of it.

After drying off everything went quite fast, I was told to put on my new underpants and then I was also helped to put on my overalls again. This made me realize again that I could not take off these overalls alone and not without permission. This only made wearing the overalls even more exciting for me. When I was belted back into the chair at the dining table, I could hardly concentrate on my homework at first. But Mrs. Bergmann visited Pia, Jonas and me at regular intervals to monitor the progress of the work. I felt quite comfortable again. To have someone who can help you is a wonderful thing that I didn't have at home and missed a lot, as I realized that afternoon.

When all three of us finished our homework, I was finally allowed to see Jonas' room. It was not very big, but very nicely furnished. The desk stood by the window and next to it there was a mattress on the floor, on which there were some pillows and countless cuddly toys. Which I found very amusing, because I myself also still liked to have cuddly toys, even I perhaps was a bit old for that at the age of 12. But my passion couldn't be that unusual when Jonas also had so many. Then there was a bookcase with all kinds of toys and a few books. What I was especially jealous of was the street-themed carpet that Jonas had in the whole room. I always wanted to have one of these, but my father thought it was too childish when I was 8 years old and wanted to have it.

The fact that Jonas had neither a wardrobe nor a bed in his room did not draw my attention that day. Maybe I had assumed that he would sleep on the mattress on the floor. I could not have imagined how I would finally discover the answer to that mystery.

## New experiences

After all the excitement and new experiences we were supposed to play outside in the garden again and so first Jonas and I were led by hand to the terrace and a little later Pia joined us. It didn't really bother me that Jonas his little sister was always with in the garden. It was big enough and there were enough playing possibilities for the three of us. In the evening I was invited for dinner again, which was again a bit embarrassing: if I were to invite Jonas at my place, I would have to take care of everything myself. I also thought that Mrs. Bergmann knew this and would probably not allow it. Therefore I did not even suggest it. Maybe later, when we were real friends, I would be able to invite Jonas to my place.

That evening Pia and Jonas were brought back to the house by Jonas his father right after dinner. Since Mrs. Bergmann still had to take off my overalls again, I could see that he brought them both into the bathroom. I was changed again in the last room before the bathroom and was allowed to go home alone. But not without being invited again for the afternoon the next day. Mrs. Bergmann had called it an invitation, but the way she said it sounded more like a requirement, and also to come wearing one of my overalls.

That evening my head had a lot to process. All the experiences with the Bergmanns, especially the one on the toilet. But I was still looking forward to another visit, even if it meant that I would probably be affected by the procedure with the toilet again. But was I really afraid of that, or would I even like to endure Mrs. Bergmann's treatment next time?

The bigger problem seemed to me to be that if I were to go to the Bergmanns the next day with my overalls, I would have to wear them to school. But I would certainly not dare to do that. I didn't want to be teased in the same way as I had done with Jonas. It took me a long time until I finally fell asleep that day.

So the next morning I got out of bed accordingly badly. My plan was to put the blue and white striped overalls into my satchel and to put them on after school in the toilet when everyone had gone. So I got ready and put on my normal blue jeans and put the overalls into the satchel. I had carelessly left the black overalls on my bed.

My father had just gotten home from work and was sitting in the kitchen when I wanted to grab a couple of quick milk cups for breakfast. So I could not avoid a short conversation. But luckily it was as inconsequential as often.

But then suddenly the doorbell rang, which was extremely unusual at that time. My father got up annoyed and went to the door. I followed a little later and waited in the hallway behind the kitchen door to hear who it might be so early.

"Good morning Mr. Kaminski! Bergmann my name, I am the mother of Jonas here and he is a school friend of Robert. We live a few streets away." I heard and my heart almost stopped. What did Mrs. Bergmann want from my father and then also so early before school?

"Ohh Good morning Mrs. Bergmann, has Robert done something wrong?" was the first question from my father. That was so typical again, he was only interested in me when I had 'done something'. Suddenly he wasn't as annoyed as he was a minute ago.

"No Mr. Kaminski, he's a very good boy. But since I wanted to take Jonas to school this morning, I thought I might as well take Robert with me," she explained the situation.

"Robi !! It's for you, are you ready?" my father called into the hall.

I liked the name "Robi" even less than "Robert" and my father knew that too. My mother had used it when I was little. That was OK then, but when you're 12 years old you don't want to be called "Robi" by your parents. That was embarrassing.

"Yes, I'll be right there daddy" I said and quickly crept across the hall in the vain hope not to be seen by Mrs. Bergmann or Jonas, but the front door was wide open.

"Another small question Mr. Kaminski, if you'd have 2 more minutes" Mrs. Bergmann said to my father while she had seen me in the hall without overalls.

"Surely Mrs. Bergmann, is there something Robert has been up to anyway?" my father asked and laughed out loud. I stopped behind the door of my room and listened further.

"No no, don't worry about that Mr. Kaminski. It's just that Robert and Jonas have become friends and they like to play together. I just wanted to make sure that Robert told you that he would be with us after school and made sure you wouldn't mind. Of course I make certain that they do their homework first before they play. Mrs. Bergmann explained.

"Ahh yes, there you go, he didn't say anything about that," my father said and laughed diabolically again and I smelled trouble brewing. Although he usually didn't care what I did in the afternoons, as long as the school grades were right. He even told me that once.

"Well, it's not such a big deal, and I'm here to discuss it with you. If Robert should have other obligations, those would of course come first," Mrs. Bergmann then said to my father.

"No, I basically leave him a lot of freedom, you know, my working hours are unfortunately a little inconvenient as a single father and so I have to trust the school mostly and Robert knows exactly that the school grades are the most important indicator for me," my father repeated what he had told me. I was glad that he did not go into it any further.

"Yes good Mr. Kaminski, then you have nothing against Robert coming to us after school until further notice? I can write down our telephone number for emergencies," said Mrs. Bergmann.

"Yes that's fine, gladly Mrs. Bergmann!" my father said.

I was a little surprised: on the one hand by Mrs. Bergmann's wording "until further notice" - would I now always go to Jonas' house after school? That was certainly great, but also somehow scary and it sounded so final, as if I had to and not only could. I was a bit worried about all the house rules, of which I certainly didn't know all yet. On the other hand, I was surprised by my father's reaction, as if he was quite happy with the fact that I would go to the Bergmanns, which would definitely mean much less freedom for me.

"Oh it's getting time we left for school," said Mrs. Bergmann.

"Where is that boy? Oh come on in, let's have a look in his room and see how far he's got", my father suggested.

He didn't need to ask twice and a few seconds later she stood with Jonas in my room, which was much messier than Jonas'. Jonas grinned at me cheekily and then looked around my room. Mrs. Bergmann greeted me with a "Good morning" and took up the situation much faster and she had recognized the most important things in my room in the blink of an eye. My father suddenly remembered that he still had something on the stove in the kitchen and left us.

"So Robert, quickly now, you don't even have your overalls on yet. We're going to be late for school." As usual with Mrs. Bergmann, she didn't hesitate long and quickly helped me out of my jeans and only a moment later she had the black overalls from my bed in her hand and held them up to me to step into. When my father came back the straps were already adjusted and the overalls snuggled up comfortably around my upper body again. But I couldn't really enjoy it when I thought about what would happen to me in school if the others saw me in them.

Mrs. Bergmann, however, already had my satchel in her hand and put it on my back. My father said nothing about it, I didn't even know if he noticed that I had changed when he came back. Mrs. Bergmann then said goodbye to my father and quickly pushed Jonas and me out of our house. Afterwards all three of us went to school.

I was a bit silent that morning, the great hugging feeling of the overalls and every step I felt between my legs reminded me that in a few minutes I would be standing in overalls at school together with Jonas, who of course also wore overalls again.

I don't know if it was because I was wearing the black overalls, but it was far less bad than I expected. We arrived at school at the moment the bell rang, so there was no opportunity for the others to hackle me before class. I could notice others whispering about me and Jonas. Only in the break there were some stupid sayings, but I was able to counter them quite well. Of course there were also jokes about how Jonas and I were probably best friends now. But when I didn't deny that, the others first looked funny and didn't know how to react. Especially since I myself had participated just a few days ago in teasing Jonas with his overalls.

But the best thing about this school day was that I got a compliment from Anika about my overalls, how great they looked on me. Anika was also not known for being mean or sneaky and everybody knew that she was totally serious. Of course I was especially happy about that and the others who had made jokes about me and the overalls were suddenly very quiet.

So I had justified hope that I could continue to wear my beloved overalls at school in the future. After the event in the morning with Mrs. Bergmann I would probably have no other choice in the foreseeable future anyway. So I went back to his home together

with Jonas. It became a habit over the next few days that I was not to break again so quickly.

The first days were very similar to the second visit, to the Bergmanns. I got used to being checked while washing my hands or even getting my hands washed. The visits to the toilet together with Mrs. Bergmann became a routine in which I felt more and more comfortable. It was not so bad to hand over the responsibility and just let it happen. My underpants also stayed cleaner and cleaner, even though I couldn't avoid it completely, since all I had at school was this stupid hard toilet paper. At home I got used to wet the toilet paper with water to clean myself better. Somehow I wanted to prove to Mrs. Bergmann that I could do that myself. Even though if my underpants were not completely clean, she simply exchanged them without comment and did not reproach me any further.

Even though I almost always wore one of my overalls to school now, as long as they came out of the laundry in time, at their house Mrs. Bergmann always put me in one of Jonas' overalls with these other fastenings. I also noticed that Jonas and Pia were always changed after school into those lockable overalls. It had to be one of the house rules, which were not explicitly mentioned to me, but which were there.

The following weekend I did not go to the Bergmanns because it was not convenient. I walked through the streets and to the forest where there was always something to discover. It was a wonderful place to play. But after a few hours I missed Jonas and wondered why he couldn't play with me on weekends, preferably in the forest. But then I realized that I had never seen Jonas in the forest or on any of the playgrounds in our part of town. Of course I had worn my two overalls alternately the whole weekend.

On Monday I was back at the Bergmanns as agreed with my father. I finished my homework a bit earlier than Jonas, but I wasn't allowed to get up and had to wait until Jonas was done as well before we could play together. This was nothing new for me and most of the time I talked to Mrs. Bergmann and she often asked me about my home. I felt during these conversations that it was good for me to have someone to talk to about it.

On this day in one of these talks we talked about the weekend and I told her about my passion to roam the forest and discover everything possible. I also asked if Jonas could come with me; I argued that it would be much more exciting for the two of us. Mrs. Bergmann then told me that Jonas had certain household tasks to do. He could decide for himself when he did something, and Jonas did them all during the weekend.

I understood that with my daily visits until dinner, Jonas would probably be taking up a lot of his time. Since I didn't know such tasks at my home, I imagined that such things only existed in "real" families and I didn't have them. So I found it even more interesting and asked if I could support Jonas with his tasks.

Thereupon Mrs. Bergmann first had to laugh a bit, but then looked a bit thoughtful as if she was worried about something. But in the end she said that she wanted to think about it and also wanted to discuss it with her husband. I didn't understand why this was such a big deal, but when I thought about it later, I realized that I had pushed myself further and further into this family, although I had no right to do so: it was not my family.

Anyway, I felt comfortable with the Bergmanns and even the funny chair with the belts and the other rules didn't change that. In the afternoon I played again with Jonas and Pia in the garden. It was a routine I couldn't resist and which I had internalized more and more and increasingly considered normal.

On Wednesday of this week, however, Mrs. Bergmann unexpectedly had to take Pia to a doctor's appointment after we had all finished our homework. And so it happened that we stood together on the terrace and Mrs. Bergmann explained the situation to Jonas and me.

"Kids I have to take Pia to the doctor now and Daddy won't be home for another half an hour. So I thought to myself, Jonas you can mow the lawn in that time. And since Rob asked me if he could help you, this is a good opportunity," she said to us.

I was totally excited, hoping that Jonas would be allowed to go into the forest on Saturday. "Cool, then you will be finished faster," I said to him. But then Jonas looked at me and there was nothing of joy in his eyes. He looked as if he'd just been given bad news. I didn't understand what his problem was or if I had said something wrong.

But his mother bent down to one of the terrace chairs and grabbed something that was lying there.

"Please don't Mum... not when Rob is here." Jonas suddenly started begging his mother. I didn't understand the first thing of what was happening and what it had to do with me.

"Jonas! You know I don't want to hear any complaining. Dad won't be here for half an hour and Robert knows that we have strict rules," she said to Jonas in a strict tone that surprised and intimidated me a little. But I still did not know what it was all about.

"Come on, stretch out your arms now, I have little time left" she said in a strict tone and Jonas obeyed the order immediately, but I could see that he was about to cry. His eyes were already moist.

"You know Robert, for while I'm gone and until my husband comes, I'll put a harness on you so I'll know exactly where you are. Jonas doesn't like it, but it's not that bad and it's for your safety," Mrs. Bergmann explained to me in a calm and objective tone. She had pulled a tangle of leather straps, which she had taken from the chair, apart and put them over Jonas' head and arms.

"Please turn around," Jonas was instructed.

Then I could observe how his mother closed two straps one after the other. One just below the arms around the chest and a slightly wider one around the hips. Then two straps that ran over the shoulders were crossed and threaded through the chest strap in the back, blocking access to the buckle of the chest strap. Then the two shoulder straps were buckled to the hip belt and pulled tight. That way the buckle of the hip belt was blocked likewise. Finally, the belt, which was hanging down in the middle of the hip belt at the front, was pulled through between the legs and also pulled tight and fastened to the hip belt at the back. When Mrs. Bergmann was finished with this, she took a small padlock out of her trouser pocket and with a loud click let it snap into place on the last fastener.

"So Robert, and now you, please put your arms up too," Mrs. Bergmann said to me and took another strap from the chair.

I was frozen and looked spellbound at Jonas, who, as soon as his mother had finished with the lock, started to pull on the straps. He tried to pull them looser and more straightforward to make it more comfortable. He was not seriously trying to get them off, but to get more freedom of movement, especially on the strap between his legs.

"Robert please, time is ticking! Soon you can study it all you like on yourself" I was torn from my frozen state. So I slowly averted my gaze from Jonas and raised my arms to let Mrs. Bergmann put the straps on me.

As the first strap was tightened around my chest, I felt the beloved embrace of the overalls tighten in another direction. The bib of the overalls was now pressed strongly onto my chest. The hip belt only increased the pressure which the elastic in the overalls already exerted. The straps on my shoulders were hardly noticeable at the beginning, but when Mrs. Bergmann put the belt between my legs and pulled it tight in my back, I could feel how the belts were pressing on my shoulders. Not too strongly but noticeably. However, the belt between my legs increased the feeling of the overalls many times over.

After the snapping of the padlock, which also could be heard clearly with me, Mrs. Bergmann moved from us in the direction of the garden, to the very back in the shed. Jonas had meanwhile given up pulling on his straps and looked at me dejectedly.

"That really sucks, doesn't it? Please never tell anyone at school about this, please! Do you promise me?" Jonas then begged me.

I was still struggling with my feelings, and carefully touched my harness. In front was a large piece of leather to which all seven straps that were wrapped around my body were riveted. The whole thing was a bit tighter and especially a somewhat stiffer than the overalls and I tried to move slowly. I now also understood why Jonas had first tugged at the strap between his legs. The strap was really noticeable with every movement, but I did not feel uncomfortable, on the contrary it was totally exciting. My feelings went rollercoaster again, almost like in the store when I put on the overalls for

the first time. Also the fact that I knew I really couldn't take it off strengthened my feelings even more.

"Hey, are you all right? I know it's really uncomfortable, but I hope dad will let us out as soon as he gets here," Jonas then said to me.

"I'm fine, it's unusual. But I don't find it too bad now," I said and slowly regained my ability to act.

"You're a funny guy, Rob, really. But I like you," he then said to me.

"Is it really so bad for you?" I asked back somewhat thoughtlessly.

"Well, it's really tight and it's squeezing you everywhere. I really hate it and mom knows that too. Besides, we are not dogs and besides, we are already 12 years old, so what's the point? That's just for babies. But mom is stubborn as a donkey," said Jonas with a lot of disappointment in his voice.

I didn't know what he meant with the dog comparison but I really didn't think it was that bad. But I still didn't know why we got these harnesses.

"Children come, please, I have no more time." suddenly Mrs. Bergmann called from the garden.

Thereupon we ran into the garden to Jonas his mother. I felt the straps with every step and I got more and more excited and got the feeling that I had to pee soon, although I had just gone to the toilet with Mrs. Bergmann after doing my homework.

When we arrived at the garden shed, Mrs. Bergmann had already taken everything we needed for mowing the lawn out of the shed and put it on the lawn. There was a manual lawnmower to push, a wheelbarrow and a large lawn rake. I was a bit disappointed, I had hoped that we would get a lawnmower with an engine. Our gardener at home always used one of these. But with this one it would probably also work.

I immediately took the lawnmower in my hand and wanted to start pushing it, but Mrs. Bergmann went to get something from the steel frame outside of the shed, the function of which I had always thought about while playing without finding a solution. During my first visit to Jonas I had already noticed the two steel cables that were stretched from the terrace to the frame at the end of the garden. Halfway the garden, near the shed, a thick fabric rope was hanging down from a pulley on each steel cable. The ends of the ropes were connected to a hook on the shed with padlocks. Mrs. Bergmann had just released these locks and came to us with the ends. Jonas then turned his back to his mother, who then locked the end of the rope with the lock to an iron ring on Jonas' chest strap, which was in the middle of his back.

Next she came to me with the words "Robert, would you please turn around for a moment, too". Before I could really think about it, I heard another click behind my

back. This second click managed to cause a feeling of uneasiness in me, because now I knew what Jonas meant when he said we were not dogs. We had no chance to leave the garden now and could only move in the vicinity of the cables. So we had to wait there until Jonas' parents would free us again. It was a strange feeling but it was still exciting for me. Especially since I already had the confidence that we would be freed again, but the uncertainty when that would be made a certain attraction.

"So kids I have to go now, be good and active. If something is really urgent, you can call for Ms. Müller from next door, she knows you are alone," said Mrs. Bergmann and left us in the direction of the house.

I first tested how much freedom this construction left me. Jonas then explained to me that you could reach almost the entire garden and terrace with the lines. It was set up in such a way that we could not go into the shed and could not enter the house. He told me that he and Pia would always be on the leashes if their parents could not watch them directly.

He and his sister had also tried countless times to loosen the straps, but each time they had given up in frustration. It was simply too "safe".

We started with the task we had been assigned and with that we could distract ourselves a little from the situation, but unfortunately the belts were always very present and could be felt strongly on the body. I had claimed the lawnmower for the first 10 minutes, which was very exhausting. As a result, the feeling of excitement diminished a lot and I no longer had the feeling of having to pee.

When I had taken a break, Jonas and I had exchanged the devices. I realized why Jonas hated being stuck in the belts. Especially the strap between my legs started to annoy me. The first excitement was gone and I felt how annoying the harness was. I always felt my overalls alone down there, but it was not as obtrusive as these strap. So I tried to pull on them to get a little more space and freedom. But this was one of the most frustrating experiences I had ever had. The belt was unyielding and merciless. Even the tight feeling around my chest, which I had liked so much at first, was slowly becoming strained.

After we had already mowed almost half of the lawn, we saw Mr. Bergmann coming out of the garage and waving to us happily. Jonas immediately dropped the lawn mower and ran to his father.

"Daddy... Daddy... I'm so glad you're here." Jonas shouted and literally jumped around his father's neck. And he caught him, as good as he could with a 12 year old son. But he was able to hold him for a surprisingly long time and Jonas kissed him on the face. Normally Jonas would hold back with such emotional outbursts while I was close by. But I totally humored him and immediately had to think again that I could never do something like that with my father and probably didn't want to do it anymore.

Although I can still remember that I used to like doing something like that and how great it was.

Politely I went to the terrace and greeted Mr. Bergmann as well, of course only with a handshake after he put Jonas back on his own two legs.

"Daddy, can you take the harnesses from us, then working is much more pleasant. Please, please," Jonas begged his father immediately afterwards.

I had to think about it for a moment, but Mrs. Bergmann had also called the straps a harness, which I had forgotten again. But I would have no problem getting rid of this harness by now. So I also looked at Mr. Bergmann questioningly.

"Oh children, I just walked in the door. And besides, I still have urgent work to do at my desk. Please be patient a little longer. You are not quite finished with the lawn yet anyway." said Mr. Bergmann and stroked both of us through our hair with his hands.

"Oh man, Dad. That's mean," said Jonas frustrated and pulled on his straps again.

"Jonas please, you know the rules: no complaining about the harness. I don't want to have to tell mom about it. OK!" said Mr. Bergmann strictly.

Jonas exhaled angrily and returned to our work without paying any attention to his father. I also followed him somewhat frustrated. Jonas told me that his parents would not allow any discussion if he or his sister did not want to wear the harnesses or even resisted. He hinted that if he tried too hard he would be punished, but remained very vague.

When we finished with the lawn and had also put the tools back in front of the shed, Jonas his father still did not come back. Since we also wanted to play a little, we had no other choice but to do that with the harnesses on. The line in the back was always a little bit in the way. My feelings drove another round of roller coaster with me again and again. One moment I loved the tight feeling of the harness and a few moments later it was getting on my nerves and I tried in vain to pull on the straps. Then came another moment, which frustrated me completely because I couldn't get out of the thing and the fearful uncertainty of when Mr. Bergmann would finally free us.

In fact we had to wait until shortly before dinner for our release, but at some point Mrs. Bergmann appeared on the terrace and first freed me from the leash and the harness to go and wash my hands with me and only then was Jonas freed, which annoyed him even more. But I could see how he bit his lip and had to control himself to bear it calmly. He knew very well that he would get into trouble if he complained again today. How right I was with this assessment which I would experience myself the next week.

## Happiness and Punishment in one day!

On Wednesday evening I had dinner at the Bergmanns as usual and then went home. I thought about what I had experienced once again. This harness had been a bit uncomfortable after a while and I skipped a bit on the way home to feel how free I was again. But there was also a part of me that missed it. It was quite strange, the great feeling of my overalls was still there and I was happy about the way they enclosed me. But this harness triggered even more feelings in me. The fact to be limited to a restricted area with the leash was scary and exciting at the same time. Secretly, I wouldn't mind if it were to be put in the harness again.

Thursday went back to normal, Jonas and I were back to playing in the garden after homework, as Mrs. Bergmann was able to watch us almost the entire time from the terrace. During dinner I was told that I could come with Jonas into the forest on Saturday if I wanted to. I didn't have to think long: I had wanted to show Jonas what there was to discover in the forest. But of course there was a catch to it. I had to ask my father for permission that I could spend the whole Saturday with the Bergmanns. I was not afraid of that, because I thought that he would not care.

So I asked on Friday morning, when I met my father in the kitchen, if I could go to the Bergmanns on Saturday. At first he looked at me a bit puzzled, but then he asked me a bit about the Bergmann family. I was a bit surprised, he seemed to be really interested. I reported that we always had to do our homework first and that I had also helped Jonas with his chores. I did not tell him about the leash and the harness, though. My father really didn't need to know that.

"You like it very much at Jonas' house, my boy. Am I right?" my father asked me when I had told him everything.

"Yes, it's great and his parents are quite nice too," I added.

"Well, all right, my boy, but I'll have to talk to that Bergmann woman again sometime. From what I hear, you've really settled down there. That might go a bit far," my father said somewhat thoughtfully. I didn't know what he meant by that, though I had already worried about whether I wasn't taking up too much of Jonas' time and that of his family. But what did my father care? And I just felt welcome there.

"I don't want to have to pay an allowance for you there." he added and laughed. Then I realized what this was all about. Just him again. But of course if I looked at it realistically, I've been getting two out of every three meals from the Bergmanns lately. So his concerns certainly didn't sound unfounded, but what did I know about money?

Then it was time for me to go to school, as almost always in overalls lately. The black one was in the laundry and I had enough self-confidence to put on the blue and white overalls. Since it was the first time in school, there were a few stupid remarks but I could ignore them and enjoyed the great feeling in the overalls even more. The others did not know what they missed.

In the afternoon Mrs. Bergmann checked if I had asked my father for the trip on Saturday. Which I could confirm and I also mentioned that my father was worried that I was spending too much time with the Bergmanns and might take up too much food. Thereupon Mrs. Bergmann had to laugh and stroked my hair with her hand. I shouldn't worry about that and I should also pass this on to my father, but he could also call at any time. I immediately felt so well received by the Bergmanns again. The fact that I was restrained in "my" chair during these conversations did not bother me at all.

When I went back home that evening, we agreed that I would come back the next morning at about 10 o'clock, for the trip. At that time I still thought that I could go into the forest with Jonas the next day to play with him. However, I was to learn the next morning that this would be limited.

I was very excited that morning and only got up at 9am. My father had already finished in the kitchen at that time and had gone to bed to sleep. So I made two toast with chocolate paste and put on my overalls and sturdy shoes for the forest. Then I set off to Jonas. I got there a good 15 minutes earlier than agreed and pressed the doorbell. After a short time Mrs. Bergmann opened the door and let me in. As usual she took my hand and led me briefly to the dining room door.

"Rob is already here and I'll get him ready quickly, then it's your turn," she said to Jonas and Pia who were still sitting on their chairs at the breakfast table. I could see that 10 candles were burning on the table near Pia. I said a short hello and then was led by Mrs. Bergmann into the last room before the bathroom. She did this every time I got there, even after school, to put on these overalls that I couldn't take off myself and had this "grip" on my back to guide me through the house.

When I arrived there, I first asked, "Is it Pia's birthday today?"

"But yes, she's turned 10 today. That's why we're going on a trip to celebrate her birthday," answered Mrs. Bergmann and took off my overalls.

"But I thought I could go with Jonas into the forest today. ... and ... and I didn't want to disturb you at such a family celebration," I said somewhat ashamed. I was really embarrassed, my father was right. I should not force myself so into this family.

"Oh, Rob. You know you're always welcome here. And we had discussed going on this trip, we can't very well let you two go alone into the forest. That's why we planned this trip together with Pia's birthday and invited you to join us," she told me, while holding up an unusual piece of clothing for me to step into. I was satisfied with the explanation, even though I was a bit disappointed not to be able to go into the forest with Jonas alone.

But then the strange garment took over my full attention. It was a pair of rain overalls made of thick PVC. When I put my legs in it, it felt cold and uncomfortable on the skin of my legs. But Mrs. Bergmann pulled up the pants quickly and routinely. I felt that the

pants were a bit too small and very tight around my hips and legs. Nevertheless the straps were put over my shoulders and hooked tightly to the bib.

I brushed over the smooth, and almost sticky, surface of the overalls with my hands. These overalls also gave me the good feeling of a hug that I had gotten used to in the meantime, but somehow I didn't like the pants much. The feeling of touching them with my bare legs was uncomfortable and they were so tight that every movement needed a certain effort. Furthermore the overalls consisted of many colorful parts. And every one had a different color. Besides I didn't know why I should wear rain protection, when I left home for the Bergmanns the sun was already shining and I didn't expect further rain.

So I looked at Mrs. Bergmann after touching the overalls a bit questioningly and discontentedly.

"Why do I have to put these on?" I finally asked.

"Well, Robert, you know that all the children here wear overalls. Besides, it rained last night and everything will still be damp in the forest. This is exactly the right clothing for you" was explained to me by Mrs. Bergmann.

"But it's very tight!" I posed slightly reproachfully.

"Well you know Robert, that's Jonas his old pair from last year, he only got one this year, which he will wear himself. But I think this one still fits you, it fits you nice and tight. That's quite good, then nothing slips and it fits closely to the boots. That's all right for the morning," said Mrs. Bergmann and tapped me twice on the butt, which caused a loud clapping on the PVC.

I was not happy with the overalls but there was no use to discuss it with Mrs. Bergmann. So I hoped that we would not meet anybody from our school on the way to the forest. The strange feeling on my legs at least quickly subsided after my body temperature had warmed the legs.

I thought that was the end of the dressing, but suddenly Mrs. Bergmann had leather straps in her hand again and was straightening them out. My heart started beating faster again immediately, although I didn't understand why I should be put in a harness again. Because it was meant for me, so much was clear. I must have looked very surprised.

"Yes Robert, you will wear a chest harness on the trip, just to be on the safe side. Because the rain overalls have no attachment points. ... Please stretch your arms out in front" I was then asked.

I knew that Mrs. Bergmann did not tolerate any objections relating to harnesses and so I followed the request. The harness was then put on me; a different model which I did not know yet. It was a model like the ones used by very small children, with a breast plate. Two straps went over the shoulders and two around the chest.

Mrs. Bergmann then stood behind me and tightened and closed the buckles. The breast plate was tight against the bib of the rain pants and covered its buckles. So I suspected that the harness was also used to secure the overalls. Furthermore it looked even more embarrassing now than before. I also had the feeling that Mrs. Bergmann had put on this harness even tighter than the other one in the garden.

"But this is very tight Mrs. Bergmann." I carefully tried to voice some criticism.

"Yes Robert, this is a chest harness, it has no crotch strap. It has to be pulled a little tighter, I don't want you to wiggle out of it. Then it wouldn't do the job," said Mrs. Bergmann affectionately and ended the fitting with a clicking sound behind my back.

That signified I would have no change to change its tightness and I would not have any way to get out of the thing before I was released. Next I was led into Jonas' room, which was very unusual, because after school there was always a change of clothes first, then lunch and then homework, so I had never been in Jonas' room for long. We always played outside. When we arrived there, Mrs. Bergmann took a hook from the wall, which hung from a rope above the mattress with Jonas his many cuddly toys, without any explanation. This hook was connected to the back of my chest harness. For this purpose, Mrs. Bergmann unrolled a part of the rope from a pulley that was on the wall. Then Mrs. Bergmann went to the door and left me standing there and said, "I'll get Pia and Jonas ready now, then we can go right away. You can sit in Jonas' cuddly corner in the meantime" she said, left the room and closed the door.

I was shocked and needed a moment to process what had just happened. When my mind cleared I looked at the line first and then at the pulley. I touched the line and tried to feel in my back how it was attached and if I could release it. Of course this was not the case. Then I tried to pull on the line and the pulley released more line. But when I pulled even more, the pulley stopped and I couldn't go on. When I let go of the line again, the pulley reeled it back up. I was fascinated by the construction until I had that strange feeling in my stomach again, which I also had the Wednesday before.

I realized that I was stuck in Jonas' room. I immediately had to test how much freedom I still had and walked a few steps towards the door and was stopped a good meter from the door. The leash pulled abruptly on the chest harness around my upper body. This gave the situation a whole new feeling. The bib of the overalls was pressed to my chest and the entire upper body was held tight. I tried it a few times; somehow the feeling was great, but I was also reminded that I was stuck here and could do nothing about it. Which was very similar to the feeling in the garden, except that this chest harness probably wouldn't be as uncomfortable as the harness even if worn for a longer time.

I then tried again to reach the line in the back and also to open the buckles of the chest harness. But everything was firmly and securely closed. Even the buckles of the PVC overalls I could not reach. Everything was securely closed.

After a felt eternity I was frustrated and it got boring. So I sat down on the mattress as I was told and took a closer look at Jonas' room. What struck me most was the fact that there were two more of these pulleys on two other walls. Suddenly the door opened and Jonas was led in by his father and then attached to one of the other lines just like me.

"Wait a moment more, children, it's about to start," said Mr. Bergmann and left the room again. Jonas looked at me for a moment as I watched with my mouth open how he was also attached to the line.

Jonas was wearing very similar PVC rain overalls, only with different colors and his were not as tight as mine. The material did not stretch taut around his legs and the elastic in his back was not quite tight. But the chest harness, which he also got, looked as tight as it felt with me.

"Well, did you learn one of our house rules again?" Jonas asked and grinned at me.

"Yes, it seems so. Are you often tied to these lines?" I asked back curiously and had to grin. It was clear to both of us that it was actually a bit ridiculous and superfluous.

Jonas told me that if he wasn't strapped to his chair, he was actually always in the room on one of the lines. The overalls had an eyelet in the back for that. His parents wanted to prevent him or Pia from running around the house. The three lines in his room would also limit him to different areas of his room. The leash he was on now was meant for playing on the floor, the one I was tied to was meant for the cuddling corner or for tinkering at the desk. The third was mostly used for his sister when they were supposed to play together.

A little later Jonas, Pia and I were led to the garage by Mrs. Bergmann. Pia was also equipped with bright red PVC overalls and a chest harness made of white leather. There we met Mr. Bergmann again, who had already prepared a handcart with provisions and a few blankets. We children then had to put on rubber boots that matched our rain overalls. Then we all set off together towards the forest. Mr. Bergmann had gone ahead with the handcart, Jonas and I were supposed to stay behind him and were not allowed to run ahead. Mrs. Bergmann followed behind us with Pia. But Pia always had to stay close to her mother, because Mrs. Bergmann had a short leash in her hand that was connected to Pia's chest harness. It was a nice walk through our residential area, mostly over small paths and shortcuts, which of course I knew all. However, I was a bit surprised that Pia had to walk on a leash, while Jonas and I also had such a chest harness, but fortunately were not led on a leash. That would have been unendingly embarrassing for me. The whole getup with the flashy PVC overalls and the chest harness was already quite embarrassing in public.

When we got close to the forest after 15 minutes, we spotted a pedestrian traffic light, which led over the only major road. A good 100 meters before it, Mr. Bergmann

suddenly stopped and turned to Jonas and me. "So, from here on we'd better secure you too," he said to us and took two lines out of the handcart.

Jonas looked annoyed and thought about protesting. But Mr. Bergmann grabbed him quite roughly by the shoulder to turn him and fastened a line in his back to the chest harness. That probably kept Jonas from saying anything.

"Robert, would you please turn around, too," Mr. Bergmann then said to me very friendly.

I obeyed, albeit with a strange feeling in my stomach. I have never been led on a leash like this before and I didn't really understand what it was for. Both Jonas and I went to school alone and we knew how to behave at a traffic light. Well, the street we were about to cross had much more traffic than any other street on our way to school. But was that really necessary to put us on a leash like dogs?

Mr. Bergmann then took the ends of our two leashes in one hand and with the other he pulled the cart on. Jonas and I then had to walk side by side just in front of Mr. Bergmann. When we reached the traffic lights, he pulled the lines with a short jerk. It was a very strange feeling; somehow it was exciting again, but I also felt very dependent and controlled.

Only after we had walked over 100 meters into the forest, we were freed from the lines again and Jonas and I were allowed to run a little bit ahead into the forest, but we always had to stay in sight of Jonas his parents. That was totally unusual for me but not that bad. I would have liked to show Jonas a couple of special places in the forest off the beaten track, but I only told him a lot about them.

Pia, whom I had of course congratulated on her birthday, also ran with Jonas and me: the leash was taken off in the forest for her too. But the chest harnesses stayed in place over our colorful PVC overalls. We looked kind of funny in our colorful overalls and rubber boots. But I also had to realize that Mrs. Bergmann was right again. The rubber boots and also the trouser legs of the overalls got wet very quickly in the high grass on the forest paths.

The chest harness had not become uncomfortable even after more than an hour, but it was also strapped so tightly that I was always aware of it and pressed the bib of the overalls onto my chest.

In the forest we reached a bigger clearing with a meadow. I knew this place but had never been particularly interested in the meadow, the forest around it was much more exciting. But the Bergmann's destination was the meadow and there they set up camp on a picnic blanket. We children played alone at first, but later we also played soccer together with Jonas' parents. For lunch there was a picnic and we all sat together on the blanket and sang a birthday serenade to Pia.

After that Pia got her birthday present, some kind of doll I didn't know about, but she was really happy about it and I guess it was exactly what she wished for. Jonas and I also got a small building kit from Lego. Mrs. Bergmann explained to me that it is common for siblings that when one has a birthday, the other ones would also get a present. Which made me very happy, and I didn't know how to say thank you. Not only did this mean that I had been accepted into the family as Pia's brother. But I also thought it was so great that they also thought of me with this gift. I had to give Mrs. Bergmann a huge hug.

After the presents we had to leave quickly because Pia had invited guests for the afternoon to celebrate her birthday. On the way back I was totally happy about the great trip and my experiences, even if it was not at all what I had imagined for this day, since the overalls, harness and leash had been pretty embarrassing.

When we reached the Bergmann's house again, we all went into the garage together and not through the front door. There we got a surprise right away. Jonas, Pia and I were connected to the wall with our harnesses next to the door leading into the house. The lines were so short that we could only walk half a step until the chest harness pulled us back. But that didn't bother me as much as when we had to walk on the leashes during the trip, because the garage door was closed again and nobody could see us from the street.

"So children, we'll change quickly, then it's your turn," said Mrs. Bergmann and disappeared into the house with her husband.

"Oh man, sorry Rob, I'm sorry. Mom and Dad are overdoing it today. I hope you're not angry with me for this," Jonas said to me when his parents were away.

"What do you mean? The trip was great. Why should I be angry with you?" I asked confusedly.

"Well, I know that you like to wear overalls, but I also know that this trip today was weird for you, too. And now this with the leashes, I hate it," Jonas said and Pia looked at her brother anxiously as if he shouldn't say that.

"I thought this is just another one of your rules and you always do this." I told him slightly irritated.

"Well, that's true, but I think it's stupid. Especially when mummy uses it for our friends, too. This is embarrassing for me and I don't want you to have to experience all this," Jonas explained his feelings to me.

Then the door opened again and Pia was picked up by her mother. I guess she hadn't heard anything of our conversation.

"Oh you know Jonas, that doesn't bother me at all. Even though I have to admit that the lines with the chest harnesses were a bit embarrassing on the road today. But if it's

a rule with you, then I have to stick to it. That's not so bad and above all it's not your fault," Jonas said to me.

"You're a real pal, Rob, you know that? I always think it's great how easy everything is for you. For me it is just annoying, but I can't talk about it with Mum and Dad," Jonas then said to me.

We talked for a few more minutes about the trip to the forest, until Jonas was picked up by his mother and I was left alone in the garage. I fought a bit with the leash and the chest harness. It was kind of exciting and fun. I did not seriously try to get away or look for weak points. I had full confidence that Mrs. Bergmann would come and get me and change my clothes. I would soon be on my way home, I thought.

Then Mrs. Bergmann opened the door and saw me pulling on the leash and pressing myself against its limits with the chest harness. In the first moment she had to grin and I felt caught and looked somewhat embarrassed at the floor. Then she went over to me and stroked my head.

"I see you're still where I expected you to be" she said with a hint of laughter in her voice. Then she released the leash from the wall and told me to take off my rubber boots.

"Robert, even if it's strange for you: we have the rules here with us because we love our children. It's for your own good, and it's okay if you fight it a little bit. We always make it as safe as necessary, so that nothing can happen to you." she explained to me.

"Yeah, that's okay with me. But I don't think Jonas really likes it." I said to her.

"Well Robert, it's not about liking it. It's enough for me if you accept it," she said and then pulled slightly on the leash to lead me into the house.

There I went to the bathroom and toilet with the usual routine. The rain overalls landed in the bathtub, where Pia and Jonas' were already lying. Mrs. Bergmann then took the chest harness with her into the changing room, where I was also led, dressed only in underpants and a T-shirt.

I had assumed that I would get my own overalls there again and then go home, because Pia had guests for her children's birthday party. But Mrs. Bergmann then unexpectedly pulled a T-shirt over my head and I was supposed to wear a dark green shirt. After my arms were in the sleeves, Mrs. Bergmann stood in front of me and buttoned the buttons. I never put on shirts at home, only on very special occasions when my father wanted me to.

"But I have to go home now, Mrs. Bergmann, what is this shirt for?" I asked confusedly.

"Why do you have to go home, did you conceal something from me?" Mrs. Bergmann asked somewhat reproachfully.

"No, I didn't. But Pia will be celebrating with her friends now," I told her.

"Exactly, and for that you should be dressed a bit nicer too. Right?" she said and tugged on my shirt, which she had already closed by then, including the buttons on the arms. It fit surprisingly well, it must have been from Jonas.

"But Pia didn't invite me, I can't just stay here and join in," I said somewhat indignantly and didn't feel like going to a girl's birthday party in a shirt.

But Mrs. Bergmann didn't let anything stop her; the next thing she did was put on a tie, which I really didn't like, this constricting feeling around my neck was awful. But Mrs. Bergmann thought it was appropriate. She also told me that Pia would be very happy if I would be at her birthday party.

As a final touch I got a light brown overalls made of fine fabric. I didn't like them very much either. They were cut quite loose and the bib was not as high as it was usually the case with the others. But this way you could see almost half of the tie. The rest still disappeared behind the bib. The tighter overalls gave me a better feeling than this one. I felt somehow disguised and uncomfortable in the clothes. But Mrs. Bergmann was delighted and said it suited me perfectly.

So I was led from the dressing room to the terrace and could see that the first guests were already there. Pia and Jonas were also dressed differently than I knew. But Mrs. Bergmann's rules still applied. Pia wore pink overalls with a frilly skirt over them, so it looked like a dress. Everything had a lot of glitter, just as a girl would like. Jonas was wearing a blue shirt like me, with a bow tie on the collar. On top of that he wore dark red corduroy overalls, which in my opinion didn't really suit him. But his mother probably thought it was appropriate for him as well.

For Pia's birthday guests the rule with the overalls didn't seem to apply. There were 3 girls and one boy in her age. Only two of the girls wore jeans overalls, which showed me again that I was not a normal guest at this party.

Looking back, I have to admit that the party was a lot of fun anyway. Even though games like pin the donkey were not really suitable for Jonas and me anymore, the afternoon was very enjoyable and the unfamiliar clothes were quickly forgotten. After all the other guests had left I even stayed for dinner and was sent home only after that. Of course I was allowed to take the Lego kit home with me.

On Sunday I went into the forest by myself again, but suddenly it was not as much fun as usual. So in the evening at home I thought a lot about what had happened to me lately and how it should go on with me and Jonas' family. My father was certainly right that I could not spend all my time there. But on the other hand there was a strong urge in me that wanted to have this family life like Jonas and Pia had. Even though the rules were certainly restrictive and sometimes unpleasant. But I still wanted to have it. So I lay lost in my thoughts on my bed wearing my overalls and pondered about my life and my future until late at night. I must have fallen asleep at some point.

I woke up in the morning and was still lying on the bed in my overalls. The feeling of still being enveloped by the overalls when I woke up was great, but I also noticed immediately that I had not slept well and above all too little. A look at my alarm clock revealed that I was in a hurry to get to school on time. So the day started badly and it didn't get any better at school either. I got a math test back with a B+, just under my father's requirements. That would mean trouble, if I had a lot of luck I would only have to listen to some complaining, with a B+ that could happen. It could also mean an assful. So my mood was totally in the dumps. Accordingly moody, I arrived at his house with Jonas, as it was routine by now.

As usual we did our homework separately after lunch and I wondered if Jonas would also get punished if he would get such a grade. But I didn't want to ask Mrs. Bergmann directly, so I would ask Jonas about it later when we were playing. But the day did not get any better.

After I finished my homework, Mrs. Bergmann came to me and explained that Jonas could not play yet. He still had to catch up on a task that he hadn't completed this weekend.

"Can I help him with that?" I asked in a very disappointed voice. I began to curse this day.

"No, unfortunately you can't do that, Jonas has to do it alone. These are his exercises because of his shin misalignment. He has to do it alone and concentrated." I got an answer.

"Oh god, what a shitty day!" I said quietly, more to myself. Normally I wouldn't say something like that in the presence of Mrs. Bergmann. But I was mentally in a really bad mood that day and I could also imagine that I would have to sit in the chair until Jonas was finished. Which annoyed me all the more.

"Robert! I don't want to hear something like that from you. Did you hear me!" I was rebuked unusually sharply.

"Yes, Mrs. Bergmann," I replied with a small voice.

Then Mrs. Bergmann left the room and came back a short time later together with Pia and her chair. Pia had to sit down on her chair opposite me and was strapped in again. Afterwards Mrs. Bergmann fetched a book and put it on the table in front of me.

"So Robert, as long as Jonas is doing his exercises, I want you to read to Pia from her book" she said and opened it at a bookmark.

"Oh no, I'm not up to that shit. Can't I just go home for today?" I said totally snotty and annoyed that I should read something after the homework, especially out loud and for someone else.

You should know that reading is one of my biggest weaknesses at school. My class teacher once explained to me that I had some kind of illness which she called "a slight dyslexia". So she didn't give me too bad grades in English although I was totally bad at reading and made many spelling mistakes in writing. So reading and especially reading out loud was a total torture and super exhausting for me.

"Robert what has gotten into you today? Normally you are never so disrespectful and abusive."

"I just don't feel like reading and I'm not going to" I said then still totally defiant.

Pia looked at me in total horror and her eyes alternated between me and her mother.

"OK I think you need a little time-out to come to your senses. But don't think you can avoid reading because of that. I spoke to your teacher and she told me how much you need this exercise. You should be grateful that I'm giving you the opportunity to practice," she said, slightly annoyed but still pragmatic. Then she left the dining room and returned a little later with one of the harnesses that we wore during the garden chores.

"At this opportunity you can get to know what happens here with us when you are as disrespectful as you are right now," she said while undoing the harness from my chair.

It slowly dawned on me that I had overdone it and would find out right away what kind of punishment there was in the Bergmann's house. As I had become part of the family, it seemed only logical. In any case, I became more quiet and looked down in shame.

"I am sorry, it is not my day today. I didn't mean to be disrespectful," I said honestly, hoping of course for a milder punishment.

"Stand up and hold your arms up so I can put the harness on you," she said to me and I obeyed.

"It's nice that you apologize, but you'll still get a time-out," she said firmly and put the harness over my head.

I was totally bewildered, what was the harness for this time? I remembered last Wednesday when I had been leashed with these harnesses in the garden with Jonas for gardening. The first thing that came to my mind were the good feelings I had about the harnesses. It hugged you even more than the overalls and I became a little more restless and fidgeted slightly as Mrs. Bergmann tightened the straps in my back.

"Hold still Robert, I know that it is not so pleasant for you. But it should also be a punishment," she explained objectively.

Now she did use the word "punishment" after all, but I hadn't fidgeted like that because of the punishment, it was more the excitement of being locked into the harness again. It was a totally strange and also confusing feeling. I was on the verge of

being punished in whatever way and I was excited, almost euphoric, that I was locked back into the harness.

When the belt between my legs was tightened, I even enjoyed being stuck in the thing again and having the certainty that I would not be able to get out on my own. It was totally confusing for my mind.

"So come off into the penalty corner with you", said Mrs. Bergmann and reached behind my back for the harness. With this she led me into the back corner of the dining room. There, next to a cabinet, there was an stretch of wall almost 80 centimeters wide. On the floor against the wall was a kind of dog leash with a carabiner.

"Please kneel in the corner," I was asked. I was very hesitant and insecure to comply, because the corner was very narrow and I was still held by Mrs. Bergmann. But I made it and when I stood with my face close to the wall on my knees, Mrs. Bergmann let go of me and bent over me to grab the line on the floor. This was then hooked to a ring in the front center of my harness. I quickly realized that the line was so short that I could not straighten up completely even in a kneeling position.

"So now please put your hands behind your head and think about what you did wrong. Don't even think about putting your hands down, I'll be watching you," she told me when I put my hands up.

I had heard about such punishments before but I was still totally excited by the whole situation. The straps and the leash held me tight and it felt kind of great. Sure it was kind of humiliating to have to kneel there like that, but also the fact that I had to and couldn't get away was exciting for me and it still didn't feel like a punishment. At least the punishments from my father were much more painful.

"So Pia, unfortunately Robert has to take a time-out first, so I guess you'll have to read a bit more on your own," Mrs. Bergmann said to Pia. I had turned my head to see how she had taken the book from my seat and given it to Pia.

"Robert, look at the wall! I have my eye on you." I was told and I turned my head back quickly.

The first few minutes were not bad at all, I even found it exciting. But very soon my legs started to hurt first and then my arms. Not that much but the unusual posture quickly became uncomfortable. Especially uncomfortable was that I could not kneel upright, the leash held me in a position where my legs were always tensed. That of course also ensured that the leash always pulled on the harness. So I quickly became restless and twisted my upper body back and forth.

"Psst ... Rob ... keep still, otherwise it'll just take longer," Pia suddenly whispered to me.

I turned around and put my arms down. Mrs. Bergmann had obviously left the room to check on Jonas.

"What? ... this is totally exhausting!" I also said very quietly and whispering.

Pia looked at me compassionately from her chair and held her finger on her mouth to show me that I should better be quiet.

"Don't! ... turn around again and put your hands up again. Mama can come back at any moment." she whispered to me again. Her face said that I would regret it if I didn't do it.

So I turned around again and slowly put my hands back behind my head. It was humiliating, but the short moment had loosened my arms a bit. A short moment later I heard the steps of Mrs. Bergmann coming back into the room. I thought to myself how close that was. A little later I felt her standing behind me and not saying a word. This was even more unpleasant and I began to understand that this was really a punishment even if it was not as painful as the blows from my father.

The great exciting feeling of the harness had also gone and the belt between my legs started to annoy again. I would have loved to pull and tug on it immediately, but I still felt the presence of Mrs. Bergmann behind my back. I couldn't help but twist my upper body a little again. I also started whimpering slightly because it was getting more and more uncomfortable.

"OK Robert, another 10 minutes if you stay as well-behaved as you are now," said Mrs. Bergmann suddenly and I got a slight shock. Thereupon she stroked my head with her hand.

"You may shake out your arms briefly but not too long, OK" she said in her usual loving voice.

Of course, I made use of this offer immediately but did not dare to say anything. After the short shaking out, I put my arms up again and hoped that the 10 minutes would pass quickly. Then I could hear from the steps of Mrs. Bergmann that she left the room again. But there remained a bit of doubt in my head if she was standing at the door and just wanted to test me. So I tried to move as little as possible, even though my legs hurt more and more.

The 10 minutes just did not want to end, but at some point I felt Mrs. Bergmann behind me again. She waited a moment longer until she spoke to me.

"So Robert the time is up. I hope you were able to take the opportunity to think about your behavior. You may stand up now," she finally said to me.

Then I put my arms down and turned my head back and looked at Mrs. Bergmann questioningly. She smiled at me again in her friendly way but showed no intention to let me off the leash.

"You may release the leash yourself," she then said to me.

I was confused and looked forward and to the leash again. It was a normal carabiner which I then simply opened and removed the line. It made me feel even more stupid, I was not really tied up the whole time, I could have got up at any time. That suddenly became clear to me.

When I had released the line, Mrs. Bergmann grabbed the straps behind me and helped me up to my legs. Which was not so easy at all. My legs had become numb and my knees hurt too. Then Mrs. Bergmann hugged me and squeezed me tightly.

"You know, Robert, I don't like to punish my children and it always hurts me a lot. But there are situations where it has to be, unfortunately. Will you be sweet and polite again now?" she asked and released the hug and looked me in the face.

I nodded and said softly, "Yes, I will and it won't happen again," Then a big tear ran down my cheek, but not because of the punishment, I was used to worse. She had called me "my child" which had created a feeling of security and belonging in me.

Mrs. Bergmann then wiped the tear from my face with her hand and I had to walk once through the garden to the hut and back to get my circulation and my legs going again. Afterwards, the harness was taken off and I was strapped back to my chair and had to read Pia a whole 5 pages from the book. That was almost the worse punishment for me, it was so exhausting and unfortunately also embarrassing for me. Because I found out afterwards that Pia had read many more pages during my punishment and could read much better than me.

But Mrs. Bergmann had sat down next to me and helped me and it became clear to me that the reading was not for the benefit of Pia but only for me to practice. So I classified the whole thing as homework and in retrospect I found it a great thing that Mrs. Bergmann cared so much about me. Without knowing that this was only the beginning.

### Was it really a mistake?

Reading practice after homework became a routine for me over the next few days. Unfortunately, this also reduced the time for play. Nevertheless, I still liked going to the Bergmanns after school. The harness and the punishment kneeling were still a two-faced memory for me. On the one hand it was exciting and thrilling but then it was boring and uncomfortable. I often had to think about it when I was alone at home.

Just like the following weekend. I didn't go to the Bergmanns that weekend and was a little bored. But I didn't want to go to Jonas unannounced, I knew he had some chores to do and surely his parents didn't always want me there.

Sunday morning was sunny and I had slept so long that my father had already gone to sleep when I went to the kitchen to make breakfast. I wore the blue and white striped overalls, which gave me a good and satisfied feeling. I just made myself two slices of

toast with Nutella and wanted to take them with me into the living room to watch some cartoons while eating. While doing so I noticed my father's wallet on the kitchen table. This was not unusual: he often left it there when he came home from work early in the morning.

Since I didn't get any pocket money from him, which I wasn't supposed to get until I was 14 at the earliest, I often took a few marks from his purse. I also wanted to be able to buy myself an occasional ice cream or some wine gums at the kiosk, as many of my classmates could. I knew that I was stealing from my father, but I found it so mean that I didn't get any pocket money, that my sense of right and wrong was unfortunately quite limited in this regard.

In the last two months, I had also "collected" the money for my great overalls in this way. At the age of 12 I could not yet deliver a newspaper to earn money. So I looked into my father's wallet again and took out a 5 mark piece and a 2 mark piece to buy an ice cream in the afternoon. Our housekeeper never bought anything like that. So I had no other possibility to get ice cream.

Unfortunately I did not notice that the 5 Mark piece was the last one in my father's wallet. I had already forgotten about it and had retreated back into my room to play with my Lego. I still had my overalls on and was sitting on the floor putting the bricks together, when suddenly I heard my father.

"Robert! Are you there?" he shouted loudly through the hall.

"Yes!" I called back and didn't feel like getting up and dealing with him.

"Come here!" the command came and I could hear that he was not in a good mood. So I got up and went into the hallway where my father was, still sleepy and in his pajamas.

"Get me some cigarettes, I didn't get around to that yesterday," he said and moved towards the kitchen. It didn't happen often that my father didn't have any cigarettes left, but when it did, his mood was really not good and so it happened from time to time that I had to get him some from the vending machine one street away.

He went into the kitchen and I followed him slightly annoyed that I had to stop playing. Then he took his wallet from the shelf and opened it, shook the coin compartment a few times, and then he looked at me. I could tell by the look on his face that something was wrong and I remembered that I had taken some ice money in the morning.

"I had kept an 5 mark piece separate for the cigarettes yesterday. It is no longer there. Do you know anything about this, Robert?" my father said and had already gotten a very angry expression on his face. I was a bad liar and must have looked terrified. So I had to answer for what I had done and nodded my head slightly and then moved on to defense. "It's such nice weather and I wanted to buy an ice cream. You won't give me any pocket money," I said but then I didn't dare to look at my father anymore.

"And you think that gives you the right to steal from me!" he almost yelled at me.

"That can't be true, I'll show you what happens to thieves," he said a little calmer and grabbed me roughly by the arm. Then he pulled me into his bedroom.

"Come on, lower your pants, but quickly!" he said sharply and let go of my arm. I tried to unhook the straps of the overalls as quickly as possible, but I was a bit clumsy because I was so nervous and afraid. My father had meanwhile taken his pants off the chair and pulled the belt out. Since I still couldn't pull down the overalls because I had only managed to open one strap, my father tore roughly at the strap and the button at the top of the bib tore off. Then he pulled down the pants together with my underpants up to the knees.

Next, he put his left foot on the edge of the bed and grabbed me by the neck and pushed me over his left thigh. After that I can only remember hellish pain. He must have hit me several times with his belt on my bottom, on my thighs and on my back. After a short time I screamed like a pig and could not stop crying.

When my father had finally stopped again, he said, "I hope you will remember that, stealing from your own father, that's not something you do. And now you see to it that you get me some cigarettes and quickly. You already have the money," he said.

I had trouble understanding him over my crying. But that didn't seem to bother him, he just went into the living room and turned on the TV. I stayed in his bedroom for a moment and tried to rub my bottom a bit but that didn't really make it any better, it still hurt like hell. So I took off my overalls and underpants completely, picked up the clothes and went into my room.

With my t-shirt I wiped the tears from my face and then I had to go pee, all naked and standing. I could neither sit down nor put anything on. But after a few minutes I couldn't cry anymore and I didn't want any more trouble with my father because I wouldn't get the cigarettes in time. So I tried to calm down as best I could and then very carefully and slowly put on sweatpants and a clean t-shirt.

Then I went and got a pack of cigarettes out of the vending machine for my father and put it on the living room table for him without saying a word.

"One more thing, son. You won't tell anybody about this, that's for sure! This is a thing between you and me. Between father and son. Especially not that woman Bergmann, it's OK that she helps you with your homework. But she is not to interfere in our family affairs. So if you tell anybody anything, I will beat you to death, is that clear?" my father said relatively calmly and not too loud.

I was totally scared to death and just nodded my head and then crept back into my room. There I undressed completely and laid my stomach on the bed and started to cry again until I fell asleep.

I woke up again briefly in the evening. My father was no longer there and I was not hungry either. So I took a close look at my overalls and saw that the button on the bib was torn off, so it was broken and I had lost it during the whole thing.

I also thought about the next day: if I could go to school at all. But if I didn't want anyone to know about the incident, I had to keep a low profile. That meant I had to go to school. But I couldn't go to Jonas, Mrs. Bergmann could read my face like an open book and she would immediately notice if something was wrong. So I had to come up with an excuse why I wouldn't go to Jonas after school. So I went back to bed and thought about it.

But I fell asleep again and woke up only when my alarm clock rang. I avoided going to the kitchen to prevent seeing my father, although I was slowly getting hungry. I hadn't eaten for almost a day. But I did not care; I did not want to see him. My back still hurt and my butt too when I sat down. So I just put on my sweatpants again. The blue/white overalls were broken and I was also afraid that the straps might press on my back and it would hurt even more. So I also left the black ones in the closet.

At school I was very quiet on this Monday, I had to concentrate when sitting down to look as normal as possible and not show the pain. Jonas obviously wasn't concerned, I just had a bad day, that could happen. During the third break I told him that I couldn't come with him today. My father had given me a task that I had to do at home. Jonas believed me without asking what kind of task it was.

But my plan didn't work out, when we went to the gate after the last hour there was Mrs. Bergmann standing there. That had never happened before, how could this be? I knew that I couldn't lie to her and she would surely want to know what I had to do for my father.

It almost exactly happened as I expected. Jonas greeted his mother happily, who explained that she had just been to the pharmacy and wanted to accompany us home. Jonas quickly told her that I could not come with them today.

"Oh Rob, that is not good. Doesn't your father know that you have a test tomorrow? You should be studying for that today. Is your father home this afternoon?" she asked.

"Uh, well... no ... I don't think he's home," I stuttered and knew that I had already betrayed myself.

"Well, then you should come with us and at least stay until your homework is done and the studying for the test. Then you can go and do the chores. But school comes first, your father should understand that," she said and took me by the hand to show me that she was in charge. I think she also realized that it was an excuse and that she didn't want to show me directly that she had seen through my deception.

At Jonas' house, the familiar routine of washing my hands followed. Then she looked at me intensely, "What do you look like today, that's no way to dress for school young

man. Sweatpants!? Was there nothing else in the closet? Hmm" she said friendly and pushed me on my shoulder into the laundry room to change, like every day. But I suspected trouble and hoped she wouldn't pull up my shirt. I was sure you could still see traces of the blows.

I pulled down my sweatpants myself and I hoped she would hold the overalls right up to get into them, which she did. So maybe I got in a little faster than usual. Then she grabbed the straps and wanted to put them over my shoulder, stroking her hand over my back to push the back part and the straps up. She did this frequently so that I did not have to turn around. I always found this quite pleasant, because it made the process of putting on the overalls more intense. But unfortunately not today. When she moved her hand from my bottom to my back, I felt an intense pain again and twitched slightly. But I tried to show as little as possible. Unfortunately, Mrs. Bergmann looked me right in the face and so she could see very clearly that it hurt me.

From her reaction I could also see that she had noticed my twitching very well. So it was clear to me that unpleasant questions would soon follow. But the reaction of Mrs. Bergmann was unexpected for me. She didn't say a word to me and immediately pulled my overalls down again and walked around me to stand behind me. I tried to turn around a bit because I didn't want her to see me from behind, but Mrs. Bergmann gently held me by the shoulder with one hand and with the other hand she pulled first my underpants together with the overalls down to my knees and then my T-shirt up to my shoulders. Then I heard how she took a sharp breath and said very quietly and more to herself "oh my God".

Whereupon I immediately started crying, I was terrified of my father's reaction if Mrs. Bergmann would tell someone or worse, would confront him. He had warned me explicitly not to talk to her about it. I was suddenly so frightened that I was no longer able to react and so Mrs. Bergmann pulled the shirt very carefully over my head and then she pulled one leg after the other out of the overalls and the underpants until I was standing completely naked in the room with just my socks on and one thick tear after the other rolling over my face.

Why didn't Mrs. Bergmann say anything about what she saw, or ask me how it happened, or what had happened at all. The uncertainty about her assessment of things made me nervous, but I was not able to say anything.

She then cleared a couch full of laundry and carefully directed me there and I was supposed to lie on it belly first. I was glad that she said anything at all to me, but she did not talk about what she had discovered. Then I was to lie still and she left the room. A little later she came back with handkerchiefs and a tube in her hand. She gave me a handkerchief for my tears and then began to rub the back, my bottom and the affected parts of my thighs very gently and incredibly tenderly with an ointment from the tube.

It was an unbelievably beautiful feeling, the like I had never had before. The warm hand on my skin as it moved up and down. In addition, the pain miraculously

disappeared. I stopped crying and enjoyed the loving treatment like I had never felt before in my life.

When Mrs. Bergmann had finished, she wiped her hands with a handkerchief and sat down on a stool close to my head, which I had dropped into a pillow.

"Robert ... please look at me!" she said very quietly. Then I raised my head from the pillow and looked into a very sad and worried face of Mrs. Bergmann.

"Robert ... was that your father?" she then asked in a soft voice.

My tears immediately started to run again and I said in a thin voice, "You must not tell anyone, please. It's not so bad, it doesn't hurt anymore."

She did not answer immediately, but stroked my head with her hand and gave me another handkerchief.

"There is a painkiller in the healing ointment, so it doesn't hurt. You know?", she said softly and continued stroking me over my head. On the one hand, the situation was so relaxing and beautiful for me because I hadn't been treated so lovingly for so long. But on the other hand, I still had a totally weak stomach because Mrs. Bergmann didn't mention at all that I didn't want my father to know anything about her discovery.

"Please stay on the couch, I'll be right back with you. OK?! The ointment still has to be absorbed." she said after a few moments and left the room again. During this time I wiped the tears from my face and turned my head to the other side to relax my neck. When Mrs. Bergmann came back, she stood next to the couch further back near my legs and I tried to look at her, which was only possible to a limited extent while lying on my stomach, and so I could only see her legs. Suddenly I heard a click, a motor noise and it flashed in the room.

I turned to the side at lightning speed and could see that Mrs. Bergmann had a Polaroid camera in her hands and a photo was coming out.

"No, don't! You are not allowed to do that. My father will kill me if he finds out!" I yelled and was about to stand up and try to get the photo. But Mrs. Bergmann was faster and almost threw the camera on the ironing board and pushed me back onto the couch by my shoulder.

"Shh, shh, shh, calm down Robert, nothing will happen to you. I promise you that," she said and sat down on the stool next to me again and I gave up the resistance. But I immediately began to cry again.

"Please you must not show this to anyone. I will get much more in trouble. Please don't" I begged then.

"Robert, did he say that?" I asked her very carefully.

"What do you mean?" I asked back.

"That he threatened to kill you?" she asked very quietly and stroked me over the head again.

I could not answer, but I nodded my head almost imperceptibly.

"Well Robert, I promise you that nothing will happen to you and you need not be afraid. Do you trust me?" she then asked and stroked my head again.

"What ... what are you going to do? Please don't tell anyone," I asked.

"Please, you must trust me. This is a serious matter. I want to take one more picture and then we'll eat. Okay?!"

I still didn't know what she wanted with the photos or what she would do, but I had little choice but to trust her. Which until now had always worked out for me so far. But this time it was more serious and could end up much worse for me. But I let it happen anyway.

Mrs. Bergmann took another picture of me, took me to the toilet and put me back into the overalls. The ointment continued to work very well, but I still had the feeling that Mrs. Bergmann had adjusted the straps of the overalls less tightly than she normally did.

I must have still had teary eyes during the meal, but after Jonas asked me if everything was okay, I only confirmed that and he fortunately did not ask any further questions. I was really happy when the rest of the afternoon evolved like all the others before. Jonas and Pia were strapped in their rooms and I stayed in the dining room strapped to my chair and we did our homework as usual. Mrs. Bergmann regularly switched back and forth between the three of us to check progress and help. But I had also heard her on the phone, probably in her bedroom. Of course I couldn't make out anything she was saying, and I was also concentrated on my homework.

At the usual time Mr. Bergmann came home and greeted me as usual in the dining room by tousling my hair and looking at my homework. Then he probably did something very similar with Jonas and Pia, which of course I couldn't see. Afterwards he talked with his wife, but today they went into the kitchen and Mrs. Bergmann closed the door. So I couldn't hear what they were talking about but it seemed that there was a lot of discussion.

The whole thing was then ended by the doorbell. In the meantime I was learning for the test, but I could hardly concentrate: I had the feeling that they talked about me in the kitchen. But then the kitchen door opened and Mrs. Bergmann went to the front door.

"Hello Erika, great that you could come so quickly." I heard Mrs. Bergmann say, who was obviously greeting an old friend.

"Hello Sonja, it is my job. With what you have told me, it is even my duty to follow it up immediately. You know that." answered the strange voice.

"Yes, well, come in and sit down," said Mrs. Bergmann again.

"OK, but we're in a hurry, I already have an appointment with Judge Hartmann. Everything must go very quickly now," said the unknown voice again.

Mr. Bergmann then also greeted the woman and they all went together into the neighboring living room. I was no longer so sure whether it was really about me. Why did the woman have an appointment with a judge? I could not concentrate on learning at all.

"Good. Shall I bring him in?" asked Mrs. Bergmann after everyone had obviously sat down.

"Yes please. As I said, it must go quickly," said the woman again.

Now it was clear to me that I was the subject of the talks anyway and my pulse suddenly started racing. Mrs. Bergmann had obviously betrayed me this time, so I should not have trusted her after all.

A short time later Mrs. Bergmann was standing next to me and I had a bad feeling in my stomach. She opened the straps of my chair, took my hand and said, "Please come with me to the living room; I would like to introduce you to a good friend of mine.

I pulled her hand in a somewhat hostile manner and did not want to come.

"You told someone something! I don't want to!" I said and was close to tears again.

"Robert please. I have promised you something and I will keep it. You must trust me. Please come," she said calmly but firmly as she always did. Then she pulled me slightly by the arm into the living room where the unknown woman was sitting in an armchair and opposite her Mr. Bergmann on a large sofa.

"Hello Robert, I am Ms. Wagner from the youth welfare office. It is a pleasure to meet you," she said with a smile and extended her hand to me. But I tried to free myself from the hand of Mrs. Bergmann and did not want to shake hands with her, I would have preferred to run away.

"No, not the social services. Please don't. I'll get in more trouble." I cried out. I had heard from other kids at school that the youth welfare office separates you from your parents - and I only had my father - and then they send you to a children's home. What for me was the worst thing I could think of. I imagined that you were locked up there and nobody cared about you. Even though I really didn't even know anyone who had ever been in a children's home.

"Robert please. I am with you, nothing will happen to you. I have promised," said Mrs. Bergmann again and pulled me back by the arm and then pressed me firmly to herself

with her other arm. Then we sat down together next to Mr. Bergmann, so that I was trapped between him and Mrs. Bergmann, which felt reassuring, even if it meant that I no longer had any chance of escape. Mrs. Bergmann also continued to hold my hand.

"Robert, I can understand your agitation and I know that you are afraid of what might be ahead of you. But you have to trust us, we all just have your well-being in mind. Do you understand that?" Ms. Wagner said to me, but I could not yet look her in the eye. I shook my head slightly, because I didn't understand at all what she wanted from me and why she was here.

"Well Robert, I will try to explain it to you. Mrs. Bergmann is an old friend of mine, we have known each other for a long time. She suspects that your father beat you very badly. Is that true?" she asked me. But I only looked down and didn't want to answer.

"OK Robert, I know it's hard for you and that your father threatened to do even more to you. Please, it is my duty to help you and prevent him from doing this again. But you can help me with that as well. You don't have to say why he did it, that doesn't interest me. But it would be nice if you would answer a few questions," said Ms. Wagner in a very reassuring voice.

Meanwhile tears were running down my face again and Mrs. Bergmann gave me a handkerchief again. Meanwhile Mr. Bergmann pushed two upside-down Polaroid pictures on the table towards Ms. Wagner. "Isn't that enough, Erika?" he then asked.

Ms. Wagner looked at the pictures, but didn't show any expression, "Yes, that helps me with Judge Hartmann, but you will need to see a doctor with him anyway."

"But what will happen to me then?" I asked quietly. I hated it when people talked about me like that.

"Well Robert, I'll explain that to you very gladly, but you must also talk to me, OK!" said Ms. Wagner. I nodded my head, I had lost control anyway and wanted to know what would happen now.

Ms. Wagner then put a piece of paper on the table and asked me for my full name, date of birth and address and the same from my father. She had even asked me about my mother, but unfortunately I could not answer that. I then also admitted that my father had beaten me with his belt the day before, which was still very difficult for me.

Then finally it was explained to me why Ms. Wagner was here and what would happen next. She would go to court directly after our conversation and apply to Judge Hartmann for custody of me to be withdrawn from my father. Which in her view would likely be approved immediately. I would have to go with Mrs. Bergmann to a so-called medical officer who would secure evidence. I asked what this meant and Ms. Wagner said he would examine me and write everything down in a report, I should not worry. Afterwards we would all meet again at her bureau.

"What is a bureau?" I asked.

"That is my office in the youth welfare office," she told me.

"But what will happen to me if my father no longer has this cus... custo... whatever?" I asked insecurely. I still didn't realize what it all meant.

Ms. Wagner smiled at me. "You're a clever boy and you ask exactly the right questions," she said.

"Well, it's like this, I'm going to be your legal guardian as the person in charge. This means that I have to make all the important decisions for you. If you need to see a doctor or if there's trouble at school or something like that," she said and I looked at her in horror. I had not expected that.

"And what about my father?" I asked, because I couldn't imagine that suddenly someone totally different would make all decisions for me.

"Well, I'm afraid you won't be seeing your father again anytime soon," she said to me.

I suddenly began to tremble: when she said that, everything fell apart for me. But Mrs. Bergmann had felt it and squeezed my hand which she had held on to all the time. Tears immediately ran down my face again.

"But where should I sleep and where will I live?" I asked sobbing. I felt as if the ground under my feet was being pulled away and I were in free fall.

"Well Robert, there are different possibilities. In the long run we always try to place children like you in a foster family. You'll usually stay there until you come of age."

"How? I get new parents I don't even know?" I asked indignantly.

"Well, not quite. On the one hand, there is a getting to know each other phase in which we will see if you fit together, and on the other hand, they are not actually your parents". I was answered. I did not like the prospects at all. Basically exactly what I had feared when I heard the words 'youth welfare office'.

"But that step is still far away. Today there is only a preliminary ruling from the judge; after that there will be a proper trial. Only then will there be a final decision about your accommodation" was explained to me.

"But we still need a place for you to stay today, after all you can't sleep at home anymore" was then revealed to me, which shocked me utterly. I had not expected that everything would happen so quickly.

"But ... but ... why can't I sleep at home?" I asked in horror.

"Well, for one thing, you must not be near your father anymore, we have to protect you from him. And someone has to look after you," Ms. Wagner said to me.

"But... but... my father isn't there anyway. It's my home after all," I complained.

"Oh, Robert, but unfortunately that's not possible. I have a responsibility for you," said Ms. Wagner.

I suddenly felt stupid, I've more or less been managing on my own for years and now the strange woman wanted to tell me she had to look after me.

"That means that I have to come with you to your place?" I asked.

"No, not as a rule, it is still early enough that I should be able to find something suitable for you tonight. Either I will find you a free room in an emergency facility, or maybe even a nice foster family for the transition. I'll have to make that call as soon as I get back to the office. But you're going to be fine and you're going to be taken care of. You don't have to be afraid. This is my most important task," said Ms. Wagner.

"What is an emergency facility?" I wanted to know.

"Those are special places in children's homes where children can be housed very quickly and at short notice," she said. I started to tremble at the word "children's home". My worst fears were just confirmed.

Then Mrs. Bergmann pressed me closer to her and whispered in my ear, "I won't let you go, Robert. I will do everything for you, believe me, my child."

I turned my head to Mrs. Bergmann and looked at her with big eyes, I hadn't thought of that yet. And I also liked the phrase "my child" very much at that moment. Could I really stay with the Bergmanns, and did I really want to?

Then I looked from Mrs. Bergmann to Ms. Wagner and asked, "Could I perhaps stay here?" Then I looked again at Mrs. Bergmann to see if I had presumed too much. But she smiled benevolently at me and I knew that even under these circumstances I was still welcome.

"Robert, unfortunately I cannot decide that alone. The head of the office has the last word, but I can give him a recommendation. There are also some formalities to be followed," she said.

"And I am not allowed to say anything about this?" I asked, somewhat startled and indignant.

"No unfortunately not Robert, you are not yet 14 years old and therefore we have to decide this without you. It's about time that we leave now, otherwise we'll be short of time this evening," she said to all of us.

I had a really bad feeling about this; I lost my whole life in less than 30 minutes and didn't really know what to expect. But I also understood that there was no going back. The feeling of loss of control in this situation was even more uncomfortable than anything I had experienced at the Bergmanns in the past weeks.

## The transition to a new life

The conversation with Ms. Wagner and the Bergmanns had put a lot of strain on me and I had a strange stomach ache when we all left the living room together. But Mrs. Bergmann held my hand and gave me the feeling that I was not alone in this situation.

After Ms. Wagner had said goodbye at the front door, Mrs. Bergmann also said goodbye to her husband.

"OK honey, we are going to the pediatrician now and can you please take care of Pia and Jonas as we discussed?" she asked her husband and gave him a kiss.

"Yes, everything will be fine here. I wish you good luck and success," he said to his wife and then looked at me to stroke my head with his hand.

"Keep your upper lip stiff little man, everything will be fine. We will not abandon you," he then said to me.

I didn't really know what to say to that, but obviously no answer was expected from me, because Mrs. Bergmann immediately pulled me by the hand in the direction of the kitchen where the back exit to the garage was located.

There I had to sit on the back seat of the Bergmann family's VW Golf. I was quite astonished, it also had seat belts in the back, while even my father's Mercedes only had them in the front. But on the few occasions when I had been in his car, I had been sitting in the front seat for some time anyway. So the seatbelts were not unknown to me, but here it was used a little bit different than I knew it. Mrs. Bergmann put a weirdly shaped foam block on my legs, this one had cutouts for both legs and went up to half of the bib of the overalls. In the front of the block was a slit, through which Mrs. Bergmann pulled the lower part of the seat belt then put the buckle in. So the block pressed lightly on my thighs and against my stomach. The queer part of the belt lay across my upper body normally.

I must have looked very surprised when Mrs. Bergmann buckled me in the car like this.

"Don't you know these safety blocks? We have been using them for a long time; they are comfortable, aren't they?" Mrs. Bergmann then asked me.

I had to admit, the feeling of being gently pressed by that thing was not so bad. But there was also something strange about it, something that I only felt with the Bergmanns.

"No, we don't have such a thing at home, I always sit in the front of my father's car on the passenger seat. But it's OK," I answered.

"Oh my goodness, that is rather irresponsible. Well, here with us there will be no such thing, you sit in the back seat and use the safety block. It's much safer that way," she said to me and closed the door.

I put my arms on the thing and moved my legs and upper body a little bit to feel what it was like. The freedom of movement of the legs was a bit restricted and the upper part pressed the bib of the overalls a bit against my chest and stomach. This made the overalls a bit more noticeable and I enjoyed the feeling a bit and was able to somewhat repress the thoughts of the unknown that was ahead of me. Even though I still had some stomach ache.

The drive took only about 15 minutes and we arrived at a large building, which clearly looked like a hospital. After Mrs. Bergmann had turned off the engine, I searched with my fingers for the buckle of the seatbelt, but because of the big thing on both of my legs it was not that easy.

"Stop, stop, Robert! I will do that, be patient until I come to you," Mrs. Bergmann then said to me in her usual firm voice, which tolerated no contradiction.

So I put my hands back on the block and waited until Mrs. Bergmann had removed the belt and the safety block. This did not bother me, it was obviously easier for Mrs. Bergmann to loosen the belt. It just felt strange for me to be so dependent. I was not used to that.

In the hospital Mrs. Bergmann looked at the signs for the right department. I had no idea where we had to go and I didn't really want to know. But Mrs. Bergmann had me safely by the hand and I had no choice anyway.

After countless corridors and stairs we reached a counter and Mrs. Bergmann told the woman at the counter my name and that we were scheduled for an examination. Thereupon the woman looked at me a bit compassionately and said that we were expected and should wait a little longer in the waiting area.

After less than 10 minutes we were led by a nurse into an examination room.

"Mrs. Bergmann, you can undress the boy, the doctor will be right there," said the nurse and left the room again. I felt more and more uncomfortable the way people talked about me again.

But Mrs. Bergmann let go of my hand and took the key for my overalls from her pocket to open the buckles. Then she helped me to undress further until I only had my socks and underpants on. My clothes were carefully folded by Mrs. Bergmann and placed on a chair next to an examination table.

Then I stood there somewhat embarrassed and felt quite uncomfortable and very nervous. Mrs. Bergmann looked at my back again, but did not comment on it. Instead, she stroked my head again, which calmed me down a bit.

A little later a man in a white coat came into the room and introduced himself as Doctor Schulze. At first to Mrs. Bergmann and then he also shook my hand.

"You are Robert and somebody hurt you?" he said in a friendly voice and looked deep into my eyes.

I couldn't and didn't really want to answer and so I just nodded my head slightly and moved half a step closer to Mrs. Bergmann. But the doctor was obviously not very surprised and smiled at me for a short moment and then spoke to Mrs. Bergmann again.

"Please have a seat, we need to discuss a few things first for my report," he said and went behind his desk and pointed to a chair in front of it. Since there was only one chair there, I had to stand almost naked next to it, which was very uncomfortable and embarrassing. But Mrs. Bergmann put one arm around my upper body and pulled me slightly towards her so that I could sit on her right leg. Which calmed me down further.

The doctor then asked some questions about my relationship with the Bergmann family and Mrs. Bergmann reported that I was a classmate of her son and that I often went to the Bergmann's house after school to do homework and play. But she did not mention our initial meeting in the store to buy overalls.

But she then told the doctor, "I also suspect that Robert is severely neglected by his father. Therefore I have taken him under my wing in the last weeks and he has a very good relationship with me.

I was a bit shocked by the statement. Was she really right about my father neglecting me severely, whatever that meant exactly. Besides, only when she told this did I realize how much Mrs. Bergmann had already become part of my life and, above all, how good it made me feel. In this respect, she was probably right with her statement, even if it was not clear to me yet.

Then she pulled me a little closer to her and gave me a kiss on the forehead, "Don't you, Rob!?"

I was a bit embarrassed but it was also very nice and I nodded almost automatically.

"Well Mrs. Bergmann, I can see that you are very familiar with the boy and it will certainly help a lot if he has a confidante in the whole process that he will probably experience in the coming period." the doctor said with a very serious expression, which frightened me a bit.

Afterwards Mrs. Bergmann reported that she had discovered the injuries on my back by chance and directly contacted Ms. Wagner about them. Then I had to tell how my father had beaten me, which was very difficult and made me cry again and again. Fortunately, the doctor did not ask what exactly the reason was that my father had beaten me so badly.

When the conversation was finally over, the doctor studied my back and my bottom. For that I had to take off my underpants completely, which was even more embarrassing. Then I was weighed and measured and finally I was allowed to put on

my underwear again and Mrs. Bergmann put me in my overalls again. Then we had to wait for a moment in the waiting area until Mrs. Bergmann received a big envelope with which we went to the nearby youth welfare office.

There Ms. Wagner came to meet us on the corridor with a very happy face.

"Hello Sonja, there you are at last. I have very good news from judge Hartmann," she said and then hugged Mrs. Bergmann and stroked my head with her hand.

"Let's go into my room, I'll tell you about it," she said and led us into an office a few meters down the corridor. There we sat down at a small round table with three chairs.

"So judge Hartmann has ordered Robert to be taken into custody," she said to Mrs. Bergmann.

"That makes me your guardian, Robert. Your father has no more to say about you and is no longer responsible for you, that is only me now." she said to me. Of course I did not realize what this would mean exactly. I only knew what I had been told before in the living room of the Bergmanns. Still I was afraid of my father's reaction to all this.

"But there is something else unexpected: for Judge Hartmann, Mr. Kaminski was no stranger. Robert his father had been under investigation for months and his arrest is happening as we speak. The police are already on their way and it looks like he will probably spend a very long time in prison.

During the explanations I immediately had tears in my eyes again, I couldn't and didn't want to believe it, was my father a criminal after all? That could not be true.

I wanted to run away and jumped up from the chair to run to the door. But Mrs. Bergmann was faster and when I turned around she grabbed the loop of the overalls in my back. Then she pulled me towards her and took me in her arms. After a short time I gave up the resistance and really started crying.

"No he is not a criminal!" I said again and again.

When I finally calmed down again, Mrs. Bergmann suggested to talk about me first and not about my father any further. I had slowly reached the end of my strength for this day, I could not cope with much more horror news. My life had already been devastated more than two hours ago and Mrs. Bergmann also felt that.

"Erika, can we give Robert a break and talk about his accommodation in private," Mrs. Bergmann then asked. She had still hugged me tightly, but I became more restless with that question and tried to look at her.

"Don't worry Robert, I won't leave you alone, it's just better if we adults discuss this quickly without you. It is better for you. OK!" she said to me and looked into my crying eyes.

"Yes, we can do that. But my boss has to be there, you know he decides. I'll just get a colleague to take care of Robert until then," said Ms. Wagner and left the room.

"Robert cheer up, I will do everything I can to get you through this. It won't be long now and be good while I talk to Ms. Wagner and her boss. OK?" said Mrs. Bergmann encouragingly to me.

"But what about my father, I put him in prison," I said, desperate and a little confused.

"No no, Robert, you mustn't think such things, you are not to blame at all. Besides, all that matters tonight is what happens to you and that you are well again. And for that I will do everything in my power," she said to me.

Then Ms. Wagner returned with another younger woman.

"This is Ms. Kohlmann Robert, she will watch over you for a moment in the next room while we discuss everything," Ms. Wagner said to me.

Ms. Kohlmann shook my hand and greeted me friendly and then exchanged a few words with Mrs. Bergmann. Then she grabbed my hand and pulled me gently but firmly out of the room and I looked anxiously at Mrs. Bergmann.

"Don't worry Robert, I'm here and I'm not leaving without you," she said to me.

I had no choice but to follow Ms. Kohlmann. But we didn't go far, into a room on the opposite side of the hall. This was very different from Ms. Wagner's office. It was carpeted and had one table for adults and a much smaller one for children. There were also some toys in a corner and a bookshelf.

Then she asked me, "Do you want to play, or read something?"

I looked at the toys again, but they were all for much younger children, and then I said, "No thanks, do you usually have younger children here at the youth welfare office?"

Then she laughed quietly and probably noticed that the toys were a bit inappropriate.

"No, we are responsible here for all children from very young to their 18th birthday and sometimes even beyond," she told me.

I then tried to ask her something about what would happen to me. I remembered the conversation with Ms. Wagner in the afternoon and I was very worried that I would end up in a children's home in the evening. Ms. Kohlmann, however, evaded many of my questions and mostly told me not to worry and that she knew nothing about my "case". I would learn everything from Ms. Wagner right away. So I became more quiet and thoughtful and continued to worry about what to expect further today.

Suddenly I had the feeling I would have to pee soon. "Where is the toilet, Ms. Kohlmann? I have to pee" I simply asked.

"Come, I'll take you there," said Ms. Kohlmann and put her hand out to me.

So I had to go on her hand again and she led me across the hall. Which wasn't really that new to me anymore, since Mrs. Bergmann often did it that way. But when we entered the toilet room, I first noticed that Ms. Kohlmann had also come to the boys' room and then I remembered that I was still wearing Jonas' house overalls, which only Mrs. Bergmann could open.

Ms. Kohlmann let go of my hand when we were in the room with the urinals and she deliberately looked the other way, but had stayed in the room. I didn't know what to do, she obviously wasn't allowed to leave me alone, but she also assumed that I could go to the bathroom alone. I then tried to open the buckles of the overalls. But there was no mechanism I could see to push or pull.

Then I tugged the buckles a bit desperately which of course did not go unnoticed by Ms. Kohlmann. "Can I help you Robert" she asked and came up to me. Which totally embarrassed me.

"No, only Mrs. Bergmann can do that. Can you get her please?" I said quietly.

"Why that, I can do that too. Besides, I'm not allowed to leave you alone, Ms. Wagner said." She confirmed my suspicions.

"Yes, but you can't, only Mrs. Bergmann can do that," I said desperately.

But Ms. Kohlmann didn't give up and wanted to have a look at the buckles which made the situation even more embarrassing.

"Are they locked? And did Mrs. Bergmann put those pants on you?" she asked somewhat surprised. I just nodded but couldn't say anything more about it.

So she took me by the hand again and together we went to Ms. Wagner's office, where she knocked.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, but Robert urgently needs to go to the toilet and needs the help of Mrs. Bergmann," she said after opening the door.

"Oh yes, excuse me, I hadn't thought of that. This is a small measure for hygiene education. I will help him quickly." said Mrs. Bergmann and then went with me to the toilet. There she took me to the toilet and cleaned me like she did at home with Jonas. But since Ms. Kohlmann was no longer there, I was not quite as embarrassed.

When we came back to the office in front of Ms. Wagner, Ms. Kohlmann, Ms. Wagner and a man stood in the corridor in front of the office.

"Hello Robert, I am Mr. Meister, the head of the youth welfare office here. We just talked about you together with Mrs. Bergmann and I think I would like to hear a few things from you too" the man said to me and shook my hand.

Then we went back to Ms. Wagner's office without Ms. Kohlmann.

"Robert, Ms. Wagner has already explained to you that you can no longer live with your father and that we will now look for a foster family for you. But you can only live there after the custody proceedings have been completed. Normally, you will temporarily be housed in an emergency facility for the few months until the custody proceedings," Mr. Meister explained to me.

"Do you understand so far?" I was then asked.

Since Ms. Wagner had already explained it to me in the afternoon, I had now really understood all the unfamiliar terms. But when he explained it, it sounded to me as if I definitely had to go to the emergency facility for now, which was basically a children's home.

"But I don't want to go to a home, please, please" I pleaded to Mr. Meister.

"Yes yes, we'll get to that in a moment, Robert. But I see you have understood," he said and smiled at me, which reassured me a little.

"Look, here's the thing. It is important for us that you stay in one place until the trial and do not need to change places, which would be necessary if there are problems, because at this stage there is no selection. Later with your foster family we check if you fit, and then there are usually no more problems," he explained to me in detail.

"But what kind of problems do you mean?" I asked.

"Well, you know, you have been through a lot and it is often not easy for the educators to deal with children who have experienced as much as you have. For example, I have learned that your father has hardly brought you up at all lately," he explained to me.

I didn't really understand the point, he talked about me as if I was a savage who needed to be tamed. I did not like that at all. But I probably shouldn't say much about it either.

"But we have a special situation here. Mrs. Bergmann has explained to us that she and her husband would like to apply for foster family approval, and after the trial she would take you in as a foster child. Formally this would be possible and after everything I have heard from Ms. Wagner I would also support this.

Then my mood got better, Mrs. Bergmann had stood up for me as promised and it seemed to go in the right direction.

"But in order to be able to accommodate you with the Bergmann family until the trial, I have to stretch the rules quite far. Because the Bergmanns are not yet qualified as a foster family. I must therefore call upon special circumstances."

I understood less and less of what he told me. But it sounded insanely complicated.

"But what does it all mean?" I asked.

"I have to make a difficult decision and I would like to know from you how your relationship with the Bergmann family has been so far. You have been there often and for a long time. Please tell me what you have experienced there."

First I told them about the great afternoons with Jonas, how we played in the garden and also about the trip to the forest for a picnic. After a few questions from Mr. Meister I also told him about the homework.

"That all sounds great, as if you had a lot of fun. But did you ever have a fight or did Mrs. Bergmann have to punish you?"

This question was clearly unpleasant for me and I looked at Mrs. Bergmann looking for help. But she looked at me encouragingly. "Well Robert, Mr. Meister has asked you, you have to answer it yourself," Mrs. Bergmann then said to me and thereby asked me for an honest answer.

"Yes, I have already been punished," I said briefly and concisely.

"OK, and do you think that Mrs. Bergmann is strict with you?" Mr. Meister then asked me.

"Yes I think so, but not only to me but also to Jonas and Pia" I said quietly and looked at Mrs. Bergmann embarrassed. But she smiled at me benevolently.

"Well, it's nice that you see it that way, and that it also matches with what Mrs. Bergmann said. But do you like it and feel good about it?" I was then asked.

The question was a bit strange: which child should like to be treated strictly by parents or adults? But he had also asked whether I felt good when Mrs. Bergmann was strict with me. But I had to answer that clearly with yes. "Yes I think so" I said resolutely.

Thereupon Mr. Meister looked a little surprised. "Oh, that's nice that you can answer so honestly, Robert," he said to me.

"It is very unusual that I ask this of a 12 year old, but would you like to live with the Bergmann family? This will be the only time I will ask you this question," he said to me very seriously.

It was clear to me that I was very lucky that I was asked about it at all and that this decision could not be reversed so easily. But I had no other choice, because the alternative would be a children's home and the rules for the Bergmanns could not be worse. Besides, I had just admitted myself that I felt comfortable with the strict rules. So of course I answered with "Yes, I would like that very much". Then I had to embrace and hug Mrs. Bergmann.

"All right, I can see that there will be no problems. So Ms. Wagner will finish the paperwork and Robert goes to the Bergmanns," he decided and said goodbye to everyone.

Mrs. Bergmann had to sign some forms before we could finally leave the youth welfare office. I was again strapped into the back seat of the Golf with the strange safety block. Ms. Wagner drove behind us, and the first stop was my 'old' home. I was very surprised, there were several police cars in front of the house and many people I didn't know were walking around.

"What is going on here?" I asked confusedly and also a little anxious.

"The police are doing a house search on your father. Don't worry, this has nothing to do with you, Robert," said Ms. Wagner, who had gotten out of her car already and stood next to the open car window of Mrs. Bergmann.

"Please stay in your seat, Robert, we have to see what is going on. I'll be right back," said Mrs. Bergmann and got out of the car as well.

"But what is going on here, and why are all these people here?" I cried desperately and did not want to be left alone.

Mrs. Bergmann then opened my door and took my hand. "Robert, don't worry, I'll stay in your sight, but I have to talk to the police first. Then we will get your personal things from your room together. But until then I want you to stay here in the car, yes!?" she said and closed the door again. But I was much too excited to obey this order from Mrs. Bergmann just like that. So I had tried to open the seatbelt, which was successful after some effort. Then I put the padding thing next to me to the second, which must have been Pia's.

Now I was able to move much better and I could see clearer what was going on in front of our house. Mrs. Bergmann stood together with a policeman and Ms. Wagner in front of the entrance and talked. In addition, there were other policemen all the time who came out of the house with boxes and carried them into the police cars. I did not understand what was really going on and I wanted to know more about it. My curiosity and insecurity were so great that I couldn't help it. I had to get out and get closer to what was happening. But when I pulled the door handle, I realized that the child lock was activated and I couldn't open the door. Of course I tried the other side as well, but without success there either. The feeling of powerlessness came back to the fore and I had to realize once again that I had completely lost control.

But fortunately it did not take that long and Mrs. Bergmann came back to the car and opened the door. "Robert, what did I say? You should sit and wait. Only an adult opens the seatbelt. Please remember that, I don't want to see that ever again," Mrs. Bergmann said sternly to me and then took my hand.

We then went together into my room, which still looked exactly as I had left it.

"So Robert we have the unique opportunity today to get your personal belongings out of the house. When the police have finished here, it will be sealed," Ms. Wagner, who had followed us, told us.

A friendly policeman brought us two large empty boxes.

"OK Robert, I want you to put all your school supplies, toys and books in one box. I'll look in your closet and see what we need for you," Mrs. Bergmann said to me and gave me one of the boxes. The task was not so easy. I knew that I had to put my whole life in this box to start a new and different life with the Bergmanns.

Every object I touched and put in the box brought back memories of my old life that was just coming to an end. But I had no other choice; I had to do it, I didn't want to lose my radio play cassettes or my Lego. So I packed everything and often looked at Mrs. Bergmann. She didn't unpack all the things from my closet, just certain things, like underwear and jackets and a few things for the winter. She left my pants and bedding and she didn't pack my pajamas either. But her box was also full very quickly.

"Sonja, I spoke to the police, they can have Robert's furniture brought over to you, it's not far. What would you like to have?" Ms. Wagner suddenly said to Mrs. Bergmann. Once again I had no say in the matter.

"Oh, that would be nice, but we only need the desk, it looks quite decent," Mrs. Bergmann replied.

"Okay, you still have a bed and a cupboard for him?"

"Yes yes, I have organized the clothes for the children centrally and we have our own ideas for the bed. That's OK. And we'll be redesigning a cozy retreat corner for Robert. I've already talked to Walter about it," Mrs. Bergmann replied.

"And what about my cuddly toys?" I asked somewhat embarrassed and pointed to my bed.

"Yes, of course you have to take them with you, that's obvious," said Mrs. Bergmann again very friendly to me and stroked me over the head again.

So I grabbed everything I could see. But something was missing: my Benno. That was my favorite bear. I must have left him in the living room watching TV. So I wanted to run directly to get him. But after less than two steps my overalls stopped me again and the bib stretched over my chest. I was again held by the loop in my back like at the youth welfare office.

"Stop, not so fast young man. You can't just walk around here like this. The police has to document and check everything," said Ms. Wagner, who held me this time.

"But Benno is missing, he's in the living room," I said indignantly and pulled a bit more.

"You have to wait there, I'll get someone from the police and then we'll go together. You'll stay here until then." she said to me and pulled me a few steps back into the room where I gave up the resistance. It was a strange feeling to be treated like that in my own home, which it still was at that moment. The loop on the overalls made it even

more special. It felt soft, but it was still a powerful tool with which Mrs. Bergmann, or in this case Ms. Wagner, brought me under her control.

But I also understood halfway why I should wait. Therefore I searched in my room for other things that I wanted to take with me into my new life.

"That is totally practical Sonja! If only all children had them." said Ms. Wagner and laughed happily as she left the room. I didn't find that funny at all, but Mrs. Bergmann looked at me with a grin and observed my reaction. Then she came to me and gave me a short hug.

"Rob, don't worry, you'll get used to it with us," she said to me.

Basically, it wasn't what I wanted to hear, but on the other hand, she was right again. In the future I had to get used to a stronger control by adults, as the visits I had made to Jonas already showed me. But if the overalls made it so pleasant, I should be able to cope with it.

A short time later I went together with Ms. Wagner and a policeman into the living room and got my Benno and some more toys that I had left on the table there. Both boxes were overflowing and already standing in the hallway, so I took Benno in my hand and Mrs. Bergmann squeezed the other toys into the box with the clothes.

Then another policeman came up to us.

"Ms. Wagner, I have found everything you need. Here is the boy's ID card, birth certificate and a savings book in his name. The district attorney has no access to that," the policeman said to Ms. Wagner and gave her a handful of papers.

"Thank you very much, then we are finished here and will let you do your work in peace again," replied Ms. Wagner and took the papers.

We went back to the Bergmann's car and the two boxes were put in the trunk. Mrs. Bergmann buckled me into the back seat again and then talked to Ms. Wagner for a few minutes, which I could not hear. But it didn't interest me much either. I hugged my Benno and looked thoughtfully at my old home. It became more and more clear to me that I would probably never see it again.

The drive took less than 3 minutes before the car with Mrs. Bergmann and me was back in the garage with the Bergmanns. The engine was just turned off and Mrs. Bergmann had not yet got out of the car completely, when the back door to the kitchen opened and Mr. Bergmann came into the garage.

"It is already long after 7 p.m.; I was worried, did everything go smoothly Sonja?" asked Mr. Bergmann and hugged his wife.

"Yes everything is OK Walter, we have another son now" said Mrs. Bergmann and kissed her husband.

I could hear everything, because the driver door was still open.

Mr. Bergmann then opened my door and freed me from the seatbelt and the padding. Then he lifted me directly out of the car and onto his arm.

"So now we have two of you big boys. This is going to be a lot of fun. Welcome to our family Rob!" he said to me and looked me straight in the eye.

I didn't know what to say; I hadn't expected such a warm welcome from Mr. Bergmann but I thought it was really great and after all the emotional battering the first tears of joy of the day ran over my face.

"Thank you" was all I could say. Mr. Bergmann then pressed me close to him again and I almost lay on his shoulder. That way he carried me into the house directly into the bathroom and put me back on the floor. It was so great.

"OK young man, it's already late. Jonas and Pia are already in bed for half an hour. So you are overdue and we don't like that here at all. You see?" he said to me in a loving voice and took the key for the fasteners of the overalls out of his pocket. With that he opened my overalls and took them off, just like Mrs. Bergmann had always done. My shirt, socks and underpants followed. Somehow it was a bit more embarrassing with Mr. Bergmann, but the difference was not that big. Completely naked, I had to go to the toilet while Mr. Bergmann started to let water into the bathtub.

While I was doing my business I was only very casually observed by Mr. Bergmann. I noticed it, but it was much less obvious than usual with Mrs. Bergmann.

When I had finished, I didn't know if I was allowed to clean myself; Mrs. Bergmann had explained to me that she always wanted to do that herself. With Mr. Bergmann, I was not so sure, so I said something embarrassed, "I'm done."

"Good. The water is almost ready. Come here." said Mr. Bergmann and I had to bend over like I did with his wife and wasn't allowed to do anything myself. Since it was not so new for me, I just kept still and waited until Mr. Bergmann had finished. After cleaning I was lifted into the bathtub by him. He was very careful and I had time to get used to the very warm water. When I was completely in the tub, Mr. Bergmann put bath foam into the water and foamed it up a little bit by hand.

I leaned back and relaxed. It was such a good feeling after the bad day and I noticed how tired I was but also that I had not yet had dinner. Mr. Bergmann had sat down on the stool in the bathroom in the meantime and first watched me a bit and then talked to me about the experiences of the day. Much of it was still too fresh, that I could not say very much about it.

After a few sentences, the door opened and Mrs. Bergmann came in with a plate in her hand. "Well, both of you, how is it going? Is our newcomer already soaked?" she said with a smile and then had to laugh about it herself.

"Everything's fine, Rob is really tired already and has to go to bed quickly," said Mr. Bergmann factually. Then Mr. Bergmann stood up and Mrs. Bergmann pulled the stool closer to the bathtub and sat down right next to me.

"Ah well, then today we'll make an exception and have something to eat in the tub, so that it goes fast. Are you hungry Rob?" she asked me and held a slice of bread in front of my mouth.

I nodded and said quietly "yes". At first I wanted to reach for the slice with my hand, but then I quickly realized that it wasn't such a good idea with all that foam in the tub. So I opened my mouth and Mrs. Bergmann pushed the bread into my mouth so that I could bite. It was a totally strange feeling, I could not remember ever being fed like that. But it seemed to be the most normal thing in the world and didn't feel wrong at all. At first I was a little embarrassed when Mr. Bergmann cleaned me up after the toilet and then lifted me into the tub, but since then everything felt good.

I had never gotten such closeness from my father, let alone being bathed and then fed. Of course I was 12 years old and I never thought that such a thing could be beautiful or even normal in a family. But it felt good and right, and at that moment I thought and hoped that it had to be normal.

While Mrs. Bergmann continued to feed me, I didn't speak and the two adults watched me during the feeding, smiling. Every feeling of embarrassment had given way to a deep satisfaction and security. I felt how sincerely and honestly these two adults wanted to help me.

When the plate was empty Mrs. Bergmann left the bathroom and Mr. Bergmann said to me "well, now you should probably be soaked enough to be washed. Please dip your head under water."

I did as I was told and then Mr. Bergmann first washed my hair, upper body and feet and legs. Then I had to stand up and he very gently and slowly washed my back and bottom. I felt the bruises again, but it did not hurt that much. Even when he washed my weenie I was not embarrassed anymore. I enjoyed the whole procedure in the bathtub. I hadn't received so much attention for a long time.

Then the water was let out of the tub and Mr. Bergmann first rinsed me off and then dried me with a very large towel. Then he wrapped the towel around my body and pushed me to the sink. There were 5 different colored cups with toothbrushes, the brush in the green cup was still in the package.

Mr. Bergmann took the toothbrush out of the packaging and gave it to me, "So Robert, this is yours; the green cup matches your green chair, so you can remember it more easily".

Then he gave me some toothpaste on my brush and told me to brush my teeth. He watched me and was not satisfied with my technique and kept giving me instructions

on how to do it right. This was a bit stupid at first, but he also told me that the right technique was important and that nobody had taught me that before. I understood that, because nobody had ever watched me brush my teeth.

It would not be the only thing I had to learn in my new life.

### Safety has many faces

I had just finished brushing my teeth, when Mrs. Bergmann came back into the bathroom and obviously brought pajamas for me. After I was done with my teeth, she first put some underpants on me. Next I should get into the pajamas. I noticed quickly that it was a one-piece suit and I got nervous, but I didn't know why myself.

After I put my legs into it I noticed that the pajamas had attached feet. They also had rubber studs underneath so you couldn't slip with them. Then the pajamas were pulled up by Mrs. Bergmann and I noticed that the zipper was in the back. The top with the sleeves was held in front of me to get in. When I put my hands inside I felt that the ends were not open and Mrs. Bergmann asked me to stretch my hands straight out. Then she pulled a kind of mittens over my hands, which were attached to the ends of the sleeves. But these had stiff and padded plates inside, on which my hands came to rest. Then the top was pulled over my shoulders and the zipper in my back was pulled up.

Then I understood why I had become so nervous. I had never worn such a one-piece suit before, but the feeling was very similar to overalls. The fabric was quite tight around my body and in the crotch the fabric was also pulled slightly into the butt crack. The hugging feeling was very similar to overalls, only it was a little softer. The fabric was slightly elastic and on the side of the hips an elastic band provided an additional embrace. I moved my hands over the fabric on the upper body to examine the feeling more closely, but I noticed immediately that I could no longer touch or feel anything with my hands and could not grip anything with them. The plates in the mittens prevented this.

This discovery made my pulse quicker and my nervousness increased. What was it good for? When I realized the situation of my hands, I looked first at my hands and then with something horrified in my face at Mrs. Bergmann. But she smiled at me with a very satisfied smile.

"Yes, Robert, now that you have been accepted into our family, all the rules apply to you as well as to Jonas and Pia, of course" Mrs. Bergmann then said to me and sat down on the stool to come on an equal footing with me. Then she also took my hands at the wrists and held me gently.

"Jonas and Pia also wear this kind of pajamas, how does it feel? Do you like it?" Then she asked me. I nodded my head slightly, I liked the feeling.

"Good, I'm glad. But the pajamas also have a function. You won't be able to take them off by yourself. For one thing, the zipper is in the back and for another, the padding in

the gloves prevents you from grabbing anything with your fingers. You probably already noticed that," she said to me and smiled. I just nodded again. I sensed that this would be another restrictive rule.

"Well, we want to make sure that you don't get cold and then sick in the night. The padding in the gloves should also keep you from bad habits like thumb-sucking or worse," Mrs. Bergmann continued.

Again I looked at my hands in disbelief. I hadn't been thumb-sucking for a long time, but this way I couldn't even touch my Benno.

"But ... but I don't do that at all. But I want to be able to cuddle with Benno in bed" I said sadly.

"It's good that you don't suck your thumb, then you won't get withdrawal symptoms. And with Benno you can still cuddle, believe me, but you shouldn't play with bed either. You should sleep there," she said to me. And I nodded slightly again, but I couldn't imagine sleeping with the mittens on or even cuddling with Benno. But that habit was important to me.

"It'll be okay, you'll get used to it quickly. But there is still one important point. We want to prevent you from wandering around the house at night. Therefore you cannot leave the bed. There is a call button that you can press if you need our help, we will show you in a moment. Otherwise you stay in bed until we allow you to get up early tomorrow morning", Mrs. Bergmann explained to me.

I didn't really understand how that was supposed to work and especially not what it all meant. But Mrs. Bergmann then stood up and pulled me carefully by the arm into the hallway to the room where the dancing "z"s were painted on the sign.

"Shh, very quietly now Robert, Pia and Jonas are surely asleep" Mrs. Bergmann said to me and slowly opened the door. It was pitch black in the room, although it was not yet completely dark outside. I was then pushed inside by Mrs. Bergmann. Mr. Bergmann followed us and pressed a light switch on the door. Thereupon a lamp with a weak brightness dimmed up further back in the room. Under the lamp I could then see a rather large "box", which was dimly lit by the lamp. The side walls of the box consisted of a kind of slatted frame. The bars were rounded wooden slats of 4cm width with a distance of 5cm. These were arranged vertically and everything was painted green. The same green as the chair I sat in for mealtime and the same green as my toothbrush cup. So my green !

Mrs. Bergmann pushed me quietly further in the direction of this box and I did not know what to think of it. As we got closer, my eyes slowly got used to the dark light and I could see a little more in the room. At a distance of about one meter there were two more of these "boxes". One was blue and one was painted red, just like the chairs of Pia and Jonas.

Then I could see something moving in the blue box, and Jonas' face appeared behind the wooden slats. I could see that he smiled at me and then waved at me with a hand that was in exactly the same mitten as my hands. Although he didn't say a word, I could tell that he was happy to see me.

Then we had reached "my" box and Mrs. Bergmann let go of my hands and took one hand to my head to turn my gaze gently away from Jonas, whom I still looked at in disbelief and confusion.

"So Robert, these are our box beds. Jonas and Pia sleep in them, as you just saw. This one is actually our guest bed, but from now on it's for you," she whispered softly to me. Then she opened the long side facing us. The side consisted of a kind of double door and the slats could be opened on both sides. Then I realized that these slats were also on top of the box, so the box was completely closed like a cage and not just all around like a crib.

I got all weird again, should I really be locked inside for the night? I started to tremble a little, my mind was very reluctant to think about it. Strangely enough, there was something else inside me, similar to the excitement I felt when Mrs. Bergmann had put the harness on me for the penalty corner a few days earlier.

I could not observe my feelings for very long; Mrs. Bergmann showed me the call button that was attached to the back frame of the slats. In the bed there was a blanket and a pillow with bright colors and patterns, and on the pillow was my Benno. Of course I noticed him immediately and wanted to pick him up. But unfortunately I had to realize that I could only push him away. Only when I grabbed him with both arms, I could put him between both hands and press him against me.

Mrs. Bergmann had kneeled down next to me and looked at me, "Do you like it?" she whispered quietly again.

I didn't know what to say, I was happy to have Benno, but what could I say about the bed? My mind told me that I would not like to be locked up. I had so much freedom in my old life that I sure wouldn't like this.

"Am I going to be locked up in there?" I also asked quietly and whispered. Pia really seemed to be asleep already.

"Well Robert, not really, there's no lock or anything. But it will be very difficult for you to open the doors with the mittens on. But if you sleep well, you won't even notice the box. Besides, it's very cosy in there." Mrs. Bergmann whispered further.

I wasn't really convinced by the arguments, but there was a part of me that wanted to try it out, and besides, I probably had no choice anyway. I already knew Mrs. Bergmann well enough for that. So I surrendered to my fate and nodded my head in agreement.

Mrs. Bergmann then carefully took Benno out of my arms and put him back in the box. Then she lifted up the blanket and I should lie down in the "bed".

I followed this request and lay with my back on the mattress with my head on the pillow. Then Mrs. Bergmann put Benno on my chest and I hugged him tightly and she immediately covered me with the blanket. Then I got a kiss on the cheek from Mrs. Bergmann. "Good night and sleep well Rob, it was a busy day for you. You urgently need rest," she said quietly to me.

Then Mr. Bergmann also came very close to my head and kissed me on the forehead. "Sleep well Rob, the light will automatically get darker and darker in the next 10 minutes until it automatically goes out."

Then the two double doors on my "bed" were closed and I was alone in the box. I could see through the slats how the two left the room and closed the door.

Shortly afterwards my perception changed in a very strange way. Even while the small light was still on above the box, I only perceived the inside of the box. I completely ignored that Jonas was only one meter away from me. There seemed to be only the inside of the box and myself.

That evening I didn't even try to see if I was really trapped inside or open the doors. I had no need for it at all. I just snuggled into the blanket. This small area gave me so much security and safety that I fell asleep unexpectedly fast. I can't remember a dream either.

I don't know exactly when I woke up, but it was still totally dark and I didn't know where I was or what was on my hands. But after a short time the memory came back to me and I felt with my hands for the slats that surrounded me. I was surprisingly relieved when I felt them and immediately felt safe again.

I felt my hands and the platters in my mittens for a while, and also the belt and the lines that were attached to it. But all this did not worry me. I suddenly remembered the moment when my father beat me up and I knew that all this around me would prevent it from happening again in the future and that was a very reassuring feeling.

All memories of the past day prevented me falling asleep again. I thought about everything for a long time and came to the conclusion that I was really lucky how everything had turned out and that I was now allowed to lie here with the Bergmanns next to Pia and Jonas. I had been dreaming of being part of this family for the last weeks, even if it didn't seem very attractive at first sight. To be strapped in during mealtime and during homework, or to be locked up in "bed", or to be tied up with a harness on a leash in the garden. But I was still sure that it would be a better life than what I knew.

Suddenly three lamps, one above each box, began to light up. At first very faintly and then brighter and brighter. I slowly got a feeling again that there was also an outside of the box. I could see more and more of the room. Then I noticed that something had moved in Jonas' box again.

"Good morning Rob, how come you slept here with us in our guest bed?" Jonas asked me, still a bit sleepy.

"Good morning Jonas, didn't your father tell you yesterday what happened?" I asked back.

"No, he just said that you had an appointment with mom and that it would be late," he replied.

"Rob, what are you doing here?" I suddenly heard Pia ask from the other side out of her red box.

"Good morning Pia, I slept here," I replied.

It was totally unusual for me to sleep in a room with others. Luckily I had been awake for some time and was not as sleepy as Jonas and Pia. But for the two of them it seemed to be normal to be together in the morning, even if still separated by the boxes.

Then the door opened and Mrs. Bergmann entered the room. "Good morning children, wake up, a new day is waiting for you," she said cheerfully and full of energy.

"Good morning mummy!", said Jonas first, followed by Pia.

I didn't know the custom and didn't know what to say. So a little later, quietly and shyly, I said, "Good morning, Mrs. Bergmann".

Then Mrs. Bergmann came to me first and opened the fasteners and the doors of my bed. Then she sat down on the edge of the bed and stroked me over the head. "Did you sleep well Rob?" she asked and then gave me another kiss on the forehead.

"Yes I think so, thank you Mrs. Bergmann" I said and wanted to express how happy I was to be here. But Mrs. Bergmann looked at me somewhat skeptically and said, "Well, but seemingly not long enough. But that will come; in the next few days you will get used to it. "

She must have thought that I didn't feel comfortable in that bed, which was not the case.

"It's all good, Mrs. Bergmann, the night was great. I just had to think a lot about what happened yesterday. I am so happy to be here," I said sincerely.

Then I could see how Mrs. Bergmann got slightly wet eyes and kissed me again on the forehead.

"We too, Robert, we too. ... But first of all I'll get Jonas and Pia dressed. You can lie down for a while and rest." she said to me and then went to Jonas to get him out of his box. She opened the box and Jonas could leave the bed and get up. His pajamas were taken off immediately. On one of the walls was a kind of wardrobe with a shelf and a stool, everything in the same blue color as Jonas' box. There the clothes for Jonas were

already ready and he started to dress himself, while Mrs. Bergmann also freed Pia from her box.

For Pia and me there was also a separate area in our colors and I got to know the morning routine at the Bergmanns. We were accompanied individually to the toilet and dressed partly by ourselves and partly with the help of Mrs. Bergmann. Breakfast was no different than the other meals, we were all strapped to our chairs and then we went to school.

On this day Mrs. Bergmann accompanied us to school and told our teacher what had happened to me and that I would now live with the Bergmanns. Additionally she gave her a letter from Ms. Wagner which confirmed everything.

During the second hour we wrote the class test for which I was supposed to have studied the day before, but which had not really happened due to the events. It was a Spanish test and I didn't know most of the vocabulary and totally blew the test. Which I also knew and when we got the paper back a few days later, I had a full-on E. I was totally depressed and also afraid of how it would be perceived in my new home. I hadn't had an E in a long time and if I would have had to present it to my dad I would get the next severe beating. But in the meantime I had gotten used enough to my new life that I was aware that my father would not see the work and would not have to sign it.

Nevertheless, I had a very bad feeling about returning to my new home with that sheet of paper in my satchel. I already imagined how I would need to kneel again with the harness in the corner; strangely enough the thought itself did not scare me that much. I had more of a strange kind of anticipation of it. I was more afraid of disappointing my foster parents.

But it all turned out quite differently: when I was strapped to my chair that day to start doing my homework, I showed the work to Mrs. Bergmann and wanted to get it over with. But then I only had a long talk with Mrs. Bergmann about her expectations of my performance in school. These were not so far from those of my father, but she of course took into account the special circumstances under which the test was taken and I had no consequences to fear and I would always get her help on other occasions if I had problems at school.

I have been living with the Bergmanns for almost half a year now and it is just before Christmas. I have gotten used to always wearing overalls. I also got used to the box bed. There were also nights when it was strange to be locked up in it and I tried to free myself, which was frustrating because I had to conclude that there was no way out. We really have to stay lying there until we are let out. Especially on weekends this can take a little longer. Fortunately Jonas and Pia are always there and we can talk to each other.

I even got my own room for which I was allowed to paint my own name sign. The room next to Pia, where Mrs. Bergmann's household room used to be, has been furnished for me. Of course I also got the rope pulleys on the walls to which I was tied up several times.

I also had to take a "time-out" 2 more times in the penalty corner on the wall, which also happens to Jonas and Pia every now and then. And for me it is always an exciting feeling when I get this punishment. I also have the suspicion that Mrs. Bergmann knows that I like it at first because I always have to kneel there much longer than Jonas. Then of course it is not nice and also a real punishment for me.

But that is quite acceptable, and I am still very happy to live with the Bergmanns, with all the consequences.

THE END