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The Lost
By Julia Britton

CHARACTERS

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD, British writer

BRITISH WRITER, CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD, AGED 35, DRESSED IN GREY FLANNELS, AN OVERCOAT WITH THE COLLAR TURNED UP AND A WOOLLEN SCARF. JANUARY 1939. ON BOARD FRENCH PASSENGER SHIP "CHAMPLAIN, MARSEILLES" SLOWLY APPROACHING NEW YORK DOCKS. LIGHT IS SEEN COMING FROM PORTHOLE, DOOR MARKED "SALOON". IT IS FOGGY. A SECTION OF RAIL - LIFEBELT IN BACKGROUND INSCRIBED WITH SHIP'S NAME.

ISHERWOOD: **(To audience)** The first landfall after a voyage has always a lonely detached feeling about it.
 You've left the known world behind and a strange life awaits you.
 The ship's engines stopped before dawn and the pilot came aboard in a tossing sea and bobbing lights.
 Now she's moving slow, slow, slow ahead towards New York docks.
 Mist and falling snow shroud the dim craft as she threads her way through and I can just make out the Statue of Liberty.
 She's standing like a giantess with a club on high, threatening me.
 No wind and an inky calm sea and snow's falling gently on my face.

FOG HORNS SOUND HOLLOW AND SAD.

It will be an hour at least before we dock. Out on the high- seas time stops.
 I love this word, "high-seas" - where the only bird you see is the albatross.
 A rough, wintry crossing- none of the frantic frolics of the P&O passenger liners - only Auden, Wylan that is, belting out old tunes on the ship's piano!

IN THE BACKGROUND WE HEAR PIANO MUSIC: "ALWAYS." WE HEAR HIM SING, A UNCERTAIN TENOR. ISHERWOOD LISTENS FOR A MOMENT, SMILING.

I've had plenty of time to think – too much.
 A year ago today, January the nineteenth, nineteen thirty- eight,
 Wystan and I saw New York for the first time.
 I'm superstitious I believe in anniversaries so I booked on this
 ship because she left Marseilles exactly a year later.
 It was very different then.
 Looking out of the train at Penn Station at a bevy of pressmen,
 fans, friends - cameras flashing as we stood on the step with
 our baggage.
 Wystan's arm 'round my shoulders.
 I smiled into all the cameras.
 He stared back insolently.
 Then endless parties, receptions, interviews with the "two
 young radical English writers hot from reporting the Sino-
 Japanese war."
 A kind of trance - where I just stopped thinking...
 It was our war.
 No one else was bothering much about it.
 The Spanish Civil War was still "all the thing".
 There were endless questions to answer.
 Questions without answers.
 My life's been a series of self-questioning.
 All my writing's self-exploration.
 I began one of my stories with: "I am a camera, with it's shutter
 open, quite passive, recording, not thinking, recording the man
 shaving at the window opposite and the woman in the kimono,
 washing her hair - someday they will be developed, carefully
 printed, fixed".
 Critics labeled me an impersonal observer I was never that.
 All I meant was that for once, that morning, I was in an unusual
 mood -
 No, I've got to be part of the action.
 If I'm a camera, it's one of these new ones that Stephen
 Spender has, where he sets it up, presses a button, then
 rushes into the picture, grinning...
 And now in the mist, I have this same feeling of being cut off
 from life, approaching an unknown coastline.
 And I look at it dispassionately - no hope, no dreams, for I've
lost Heinz, my lover of five years, *lost* him to the bloody Nazis.
 Of course I have a good excuse for leaving England.
 I've been invited to write scripts for Hollywood - the chance of a
 lifetime - or is it?

Spender says I'm selling out.
 He doesn't understand. I like being vulgar – well sometimes. It
 feels good to plunge my hands into the muck-bucket.
 There are other reasons too.
 I actually am a pacifist!
 Surprising enough since I'm also the son of a long-dead war
 hero.
 I asked myself this question: if I had the choice would I sacrifice
 a million men so Heinz could live?
 The answer is a fast: "Yes!"
 And when it comes down to it, I believe every single man in that
 dead million is a "Heinz" to someone.
 In New York my host asked if there was anything I wanted and I
 said: "One thing - a beautiful blond boy.
 He doesn't have to be intelligent, but he must have long sexy
 legs and a lovely smile!"
 I was half-joking of course, but the vision materialized!
 Resourceful people - these Americans.
 But that won't happen this time.
 We're not popular now.
 The English press has made that crystal clear.
 There are bound to be some awkward questions like: "Are we
 running away from the threat of war?"
 "Is there really going to be a war?"
 Oh well, we'll just try to be honest.
 Wystan and I *both* feel convinced that war is certain to come,
 after Chamberlain's umbrella dance around Adolf Hitler...

(Calls) Wystan!

Wystan!

Where are you?

Come and cheer me up!

(To himself) Are we doing the right thing?

(In WYSTAN'S voice, quietly) Probably not...

(In normal voice) What is the right thing, anyhow?

Don't expect too much Christopher.

(To WYSTAN) I don't.

(In WYSTAN'S voice) Someone said to me: "In New York you'll
 find sympathy in the dictionary and everything else at the
 nearest drug store

(He laughs) God! this ship looks like a wedding cake!
 I'm going back in where it's warm, Christopher...

(To audience) His scruffy overcoat was buttoned to the neck and his face reddened by the cold.

He once said his face was like a wedding cake left out in the rain.

Very good description, actually.

Wedding cakes seem part of his imagery.

And once, of course, he had one!

He married, by default, really.

He married Erika.

The writer Thomas Mann's daughter.

She had a revue going in Berlin which offended the Nazis.

She had to get out fast and she needed a British passport.

She asked me to marry her.

I would have, of course, but there was Heinz to be considered.

Would he understand?

Knowing him, I thought probably not!

I contacted Wystan in England.

He wired back: "Delighted.

Stop.

What are buggers for?

Stop."

Of course I'd known Wystan as a child – went to the same prep school - a fat, podgy boy, frowning with short sight- a thatch of straw hair.

But I'd *lost* track of him till I met him again ten years later- by this time he was at Oxford and I was at Cambridge.

That's when we... we became lovers and we've stayed like that, off and on, ever since.

We're like an old married couple who've grown to tolerate each other's affairs and are so sure of each other that we can spend happy hours discussing and dissecting our intimate details, offering each other advice - and consoling each other for any disappointments!

With Wystan it isn't and never was a passionate affair - but always pleasurable and satisfying.

You see neither of us felt comfortable with lovers of our own class.

For me they had to be sexy and sensuous with beautiful bodies - and that was all - so far - at least.

And working class, or foreign, preferably both.

Intellect was never part of the deal - not even honesty!.

But all this changed when I had Heinz in Berlin.

He's still there.

Still in Germany, in spite of all my efforts to get him out.

I'll probably never see him again... and if in the years to come I do find him again, what would he be like?

Imprisonment by the Nazis and forced service in Hitler's armies would surely make him a different person.
Unrecognisable as the old Heinz!

(Calls) Wystan!
Wystan!
Come back...

Come back, do you hear me?
(To himself) I want to talk to you!

(To audience) He put his head out of the doorway briefly and said...

(In WYSTAN'S voice) It's too bloody cold!
My corns are bloody killing me.
Why don't you come in here where it's warm?
More or less.
Whisky!
Don't you want a whisky?

(To audience) Wystan swung back the heavy polished door of the companionway and... **(looks around)** disappeared!
I looked at the engraved glass panels and the shining brass.
Another door was closing.
It seemed like the door separating my life in Europe from this new life.
I knew there was no going back.
I've always been superstitious.
I went to a fortune-teller before I sailed.
She told me I'd be "going over the water and there I'd meet the one I had awaited all my life."
I'm waiting to see if her prognostications will come true.
In the meantime I intend to write a book, about myself and others who have the same dilemmas as I do...
To tell my own story as honestly and as objectively as I can.
I'll write it in the third person about 'Christopher' - not about 'me'.
And there won't be much about my childhood - even now that's too remote.
It will be about my life and my relationships until this hour, this moment - when I'm standing here, looking through the mist
Perhaps when I've written it, I'll have found the one I hope to dedicate it to...

LIGHT CHANGE.

I learned most of what I know about myself in Germany – Berlin, to be specific.

Wystan had been to Germany and was loud in its praises.

I began to think of Germany as an escape - from Kathleen, my mother, who wanted me to be a university don - Oxford, preferably - but I only lasted a year at Cambridge.

Then came an abortive career in medicine, fuelled by the fire on has when young of service to humanity.

I remember watching a man's leg being amputated.

I wasn't shocked, in a way I was fascinated - it seemed like a fantasy world.

But quite clearly I needed to escape, from any career that Kathleen saw as appropriate to my station in life.

Escape too, from my father, long dead, but still the dominant influence in the family.

Major General Frank Isherwood, DSO, MC, killed on the Somme, leading his men, though wounded.

Missing in action until finally the body was found.

Our home, Wybersleigh Hall, was a shrine to his memory.

He stood and fought.

Strong, my age!

I was running away...

His eyes were always fixed on me – looking steadfastly from the sepia photograph over the fireplace.

I had considered the final escape - suicide.

I even bought a Browning automatic pistol and looked at it uncertainly.

Never one to make up my own mind, I went round to a friend from my Repton days...

(In a FRIEND'S voice) Have you got the weapon, Christopher?

(To the FRIEND) Yes, A Browning .22.

(In a FRIEND'S voice) That should be adequate.

Loaded?

Know how to fire it?

(To the FRIEND) Oh yes, it's just that I don't know which part of my anatomy to point it at.

I don't want to make a mess of it, like the fellow we rescued in Cambridge.

(In a FRIEND'S voice) Yes.

I forget his name.
 Only managed to blow his ear off.
 Blood and bits all over the taxi.
 Amateur, really.

(To the FRIEND, demonstrating) Like this?

(In a FRIEND'S voice) No, no...
 Through the mouth.
 Back of the soft palate, if you can manage it.

(To the FRIEND) Yes, well thanks.

(In a FRIEND'S voice) Care for a drink first?
 Pour a libation, as it were?

(To the FRIEND) No thanks.

(In a FRIEND'S voice) Anything I can do?
 Last letter or anything?

(To the FRIEND) No thank you.
 I'd... er... better get going.

(To audience) Of course I'd *hoped* he'd be *shocked*, plead with me.

I went home, practised once or twice, then put the gun away.
 Germany seemed a better option.

There was, of course the problem of how to live there.

I had a very small allowance from Kathleen.

And as for writing - I'd had my first book published - the one I wrote at

Cambridge - but so far it had only sold five, *five* copies.

(Smiles widely) But there was always my old Uncle Henry...

I was his heir.

So I thought he might help me.

I went along to his flat in town...

(To UNCLE HENRY) I thought perhaps you might think of letting me have a bit of cash - I mean from what I'll inherit later on.

We do have a few things in common, you know.

(In UNCLE HENRY'S voice) You mean the family?

(To UNCLE HENRY) No.

I mean our tastes... certain aspects of our private lives.

(In UNCLE HENRY'S voice) Cheeky bounder, aren't you?

Never mind my lad, I was much the same at your age.

Always pestering my father, always...

(To UNCLE HENRY) I want to go to Germany.

Wystan tells me things are far freer in Berlin and lots of young blond boys, willing, I mean, just waiting to... to...

(In UNCLE HENRY'S voice) Buggers Happy Hunting Ground!

(To UNCLE HENRY, laughing) Yes.

(In UNCLE HENRY'S voice) I see your point dear boy,

But of course that wouldn't suit me.

Brute strength, that's the ticket.

Guardsmen six-footers - nothing to touch them.

You should see Reginald - he's what I call a tearer, a regular tearin' bugger, don't you know?

The rougher the buggers are the better they are.

I paid Ernie - he's a groom - five quid not to wash for a month.

Smelt like a bloody fox - delicious.

(Laughs) Berlin, is it?

(To UNCLE HENRY) Yes, Uncle Henry...

(In UNCLE HENRY'S voice, waving his hands) A varitable den of vice.

But I much prefer Rome, dear boy - all those parties and orgies and...

And old Mussolini, good fellow, that, keeps the rabble down and make the trains run on time.

Well, dear boy, I think I might be able to rally to the cause.

(To UNCLE HENRY) Thank you Uncle Henry!

You're a damn good sport!

(To audience) He waved his manicured hands and his rings flashed.

I caught a whiff... **(Sniffs)** a whiff of scent.

(In UNCLE HENRY'S voice. Gestures with index finger)

But on one condition!

You must tell me all about your sexual adventures!

Details, boy...

I want to hear all the intimate details!

(To audience) It seemed a *small* price to pay for an allowance that made me independent.

Also I enjoyed the idea of embroidering on the facts to entertain him.

Wystan was in England tutoring a handsome young boy in some ancestral mansion.

I met him when he came to town to see his publishers...

(In WYSTAN'S voice) Of course you must go to Berlin!

Christopher, listen...

There are a hundred and seventy boy-bars in Berlin!

(To WYSTAN) That's enough!

(Eager) When can we leave?

(In WYSTAN'S voice) I tell you, there's no where like it.

This is where all one's fantasies turn to reality.

There's one bar, the "Cosy Corner"

(To WYSTAN) The "Cosy Corner"?

(In WYSTAN'S voice) Yes, it's in the Hellensches Tor, a working class district.

The young men are mostly juvenile delinquents.

They're quite willing to offer their... services for a couple of quid or even a present.

(To WYSTAN) It's sounds wonderful.

(In WYSTAN'S voice) I fucked a delightful a boy there called Pieps - a sort of cross between Josephine Baker and a rugger player.

I mean he's incredibly sensuous, and slim but tough.

Great wrestler.

Usually leaves me black and blue.

You liked boxing and all that at Repton, didn't you?

(To WYSTAN) It all sounds like good material for writing.

(In WYSTAN'S voice) Absolutely right!
 All you have to do is keep a diary.
 But don't just sit there taking notes, Christopher!
 Get into the swing.
 You'll lose all your inhibitions and actually enjoy yourself.
 I can't get there yet.
 I've got to finish revising for my publisher and save some
 money.
 Don't wait for me.
 Go ahead.
 You can stay with Francis!

(To WYSTAN, surprised) Francis?
 Who's Francis?

(In WYSTAN'S voice) Francis Turville-Petre - Oxford, classics,
 you remember...
 Brilliant man - got a first- seemed to have a great future in
 archaeology.
 But that's over.
 He's completely *lost*.
 Drinking himself to death, fucks all the boys - but he'll take you
 around.

(To audience) So in Germany... I found Francis - in his rooms
 at the Hirschfield Institute.
 This was the world centre for the study of sexual perversity, run
 by Dr. Magnus Hirschfield, a Baltic Jew, with a worldwide
 reputation for advanced research into the sexology of
 obsession.
 It seemed a good topic for a letter to old Uncle Henry.

LIGHT CHANGE.

(In a combination of V/O and live reading) "Dear Uncle
 Henry, You'd really enjoy this place.
 It's a mansion which once belonged the famous violinist -
 Joseph Joachim - classic, marble pillars, all that.
 You can almost hear Brahms.
 Actually there is a good musician there now.
 Jewish.

VIOLIN MUSIC: “BEETHOVEN MINUET IN G”.

Concert violinist.

He used to play with the Griller.

The inscription over the door reads: "Sacred to Love and to Sorrow" – which about sums it all up.

The professor took me on a tour of the institute this morning. He's written some books you might find interesting, one on transvestites.

And I saw some noteworthy freaks including one dark young man

I think he might have been an Arab - with perfect female breasts.

Apparently he had developed these in adolescence and was quite proud of them.

He was slim and handsome, with fine black eyes and long lashes

and had sizeable genital development, which he was quite keen to demonstrate.

I was amazed that most of them seemed keen on revealing themselves.

Like the Prussian officer who wears red lace knickers and walks down the street flashing them.

Hirschfield is the greatest expert on homosexuality.

He's the absolute prototype of the German-Jewish professor, ill fitting suit, he peers at you over bifocals and smiles benignly at his patients who obviously love him.

He's playing a little game with the Communists, because they're the only ones who tolerate homosexuals legally - in Germany he's outside the law, but no one seems to mind so far, except the Nazis who are very strong against it.

Hitler says: "Homosexuals must be stamped out!

Germany needs men who are virile if we are to fight for survival!"

Hirschfield's been attacked by these bully boys –once he had skull fractured and the other time was kicked unconscious and left for dead.

One good thing, there's no problem about bringing boys back for the night".

(To audience) I went on to describe a whole freaks' gallery some real, but most invented and felt I'd earned my first month's allowance.

MUSIC ON GRAMOPHONE OF A POPULAR SONG OF THE LATE 20's RENATE MULLER SINGING: “ICH BIN HEUTE SICH WIERCHLICH” (“SUNSHINE SUZI”).

Francis took me on a tour of his favourite boys' bars last night and I'm still reeling with the experience.

But I didn't stay out till morning as he did, because I have to get on with my novel.

That's what I'm here for – mostly.

(Checking his diary pages) Wystan arrives tomorrow... and I'll meet him at the Zoo Station.

I can't wait to see the "Cosy Corner."

Well, I hadn't long to wait.

It was in what had once been a grand old building.

We climbed up a flight of dark stairs to a double swing door with elaborate handles.

Wystan pushed them open and said...

(In WYSTAN'S voice) Ecce Elysium!

(To audience) It was a big space with ornamental plaster cornices and a high decorative ceiling.

A gust of hot stale air met us.

The boys sat around small tables drinking and... and...

Several looked us up and down and then looked away.

We made for the bar and ordered drinks.

The bar was embellished with photographs of boxers and racing cyclists.

A few small silver trophies were on a shelf and some pennants hung from a bracket.

WITH TWO DRINKS.

(To WYSTAN) So what's the first move?

(In WYSTAN'S voice) Don't be in a hurry!

Have your drink and look as though you're not interested.

(To WYSTAN) And if I am?

(In WYSTAN'S voice) Mark your young man and go up to his table and ask him to... to... you know?

Dance...

(To WYSTAN) Just that?

(In WYSTAN'S voice) Just that.

Bow to his partner politely and ask if you may have the pleasure of a...

If he says "yes", then you dance and when it's over return him to his table and bow once more.

(To WYSTAN) You make it sound like a church social in Marple!

(In WYSTAN'S voice) It is.

It's quite formal.

But if you're attracted - you can say so while you're dancing.

You can invite him to the lavatory and have a good inspection of the merchandise; or slip your hand into his trouser pocket - they all have slit pockets for the purpose, so long as you do this under the table.

But whatever you do don't get sentimental.

Never mention the word "love" or they'll get bored.

Remember you're paying for their bodies not their souls.

Most of them have wives or girlfriends they live with anyhow...

(To WYSTAN) That boy over there...

Wystan!

The blond one by the door, combing his hair.

He *looks* a dream!

(In WYSTAN'S voice) Where?!

(To WYSTAN) There!

(In WYSTAN'S voice) Yes and doesn't he know it!

Don't watch him, Christopher.

Wait till he sits down or joins the card players, then make your move.

(To audience) The first few nights I just... danced.

I got the reputation of being hard to get, which did me no harm.

I observed the boys closely and took a few notes for future reference.

The boys all seemed well-built and physically fit, and took great care of themselves.

Berlin, in the halcyon days of the Weimar Republic was a haven of hedonism - the calm before a storm.

The police don't do much except make a few desultory raids.

Of course it's the golden age of German youth.

The cult of the body is at its height.

Money's scarce, so they turn to nature and the sun.

Thousands of people go to the open-air baths, or lie on the banks of lakes and rivers, nude or almost nude, soaking in the sun and baking themselves to a tanned mahogany.

We took trips to the countryside and lay in the meadows, in a sweet dream of caresses.

I watched Wystan's wrestling bouts with a few of his favourites.

Physical force seems to excite young Germans.

They like this aggression and attempt at domination, even when they get the worst of it.

Perhaps it's a sadistic trait - or perhaps just that male aggression has its own attraction.

A friend of Francis, who came with us, took off his leather belt and tried a large lashing which was laughingly received by his beaming young partner.

Hirschfield, who assessed all comers to the Institute, put me down as "infantile" and wanting to return to childhood and adolescent feelings of attraction to school friends, especially sports' heroes.

I think he's right.

This muscular play certainly excited me - in fact it was the best isometric exercise I'd ever had.

Then after my initiation, I met Bubi.

Bubi was blond and had a detached dreamy look in his blue eyes.

He was sun tanned from swimming naked in the rivers and he wanted a friend and protector.

We spent our days touring the city, making love, going to pictures and making love again.

It was my first German Boy.

I was enraptured.

In spite of Wystan's warning I wanted to possess him.

He was beautiful and he was delicious.

If we'd been savages it would have been simple - I'd have eaten him.

One gesture endeared me to Bubi...

I had an acne scar on my right shoulder which sprouted hair.

I was always a bit self-conscious about it.

But Bubi caressed and kissed it.

It was a benediction.

After that I didn't mind taking off my shirt.

Then one day Bubi disappeared.

He was wanted by the police.

He'd escaped over the border to Amsterdam.

Wystan and I went to Holland and found him.

But he was set on leaving Germany - perhaps wisely as it turned out.

He'd got himself on to a boat going to the Argentine, working as a steward.

I held him close and felt the old surge of warmth.

But he seemed away in another world.
 He gave me this bracelet, not valuable but I'll wear it.
 So back we went to the city, to Berlin...
 Wystan had numerous relationships happening, none of them
 permanent, of course.
 So all in all, I've plenty of material for old Uncle Henry.
 - and for my book...

RETURNS TO THE BOAT RAIL.

(To WYSTAN) Stop pacing up and down.
 You make me feel nervous - in and out of the mist.

(In WYSTAN'S voice) I'm not pacing!
 I just came up to see what's going on.
 The bloody ship's nearly stopped.

(To WYSTAN) I was just thinking about the old Hirschfield and
 his inmates.

(In WYSTAN'S voice) For God's sake - *why?*

(To WYSTAN) Just wondering what happened to them all.

(In WYSTAN'S voice) You should know.
 You were there.
 I was in Iceland with Louis McNiece.

(To WYSTAN) All I knew was that the Nazis sacked the place.
 Smashed and tore everything down – burned his library, an
 absolutely priceless collection - all his research.
 I suppose they dragged the patients off to a concentration camp.
 I never heard of any of them again.
 Luckily Hirschfield was in Switzerland.
 Still is - as far as I know...

(In WYSTAN'S voice) Well, Christopher, I'll leave you to your
 reflections...

LIGHT CHANGE. CHRISTOPHER USES A TYPEWRITER.

(To audience) I'm writing a bit now about the Berlin bars –
 unique in their time!
 One month when Uncle Henry didn't send my allowance, I wrote
 him a graphic account to revive his interest.

(Reads) “Of course, there are better known bars where tourists congregate. These put up a great show of vice for heterosexuals - the bands are better and the decor more outrageous. The boys dress up in drag, made up with plenty of lipstick and rouge - and wigs sometimes. And the girls prance around in dinner jackets with monocles on black velvet ribbons. Of course they *all* have the fashionable Eton Crops. Most of this is a charade of degeneracy which tourists love to watch and photograph. You see, Paris has all the great cabaret singers at the “Moulin Rouge” and Les Girls at the “Follies Bergeres” - so Berlin has to offer some competition. Last week Francis and I went to a costume ball for men. You’d have enjoyed this. It’s a big annual affair held in a famous ballroom. I went as a sailor boy and Francis got himself up in a ball gown, very slinky, blood red satin and rather tight. What with his long legs and high-heeled shoes he looked quite striking - and attracted a lot of attention, some unwelcome. You’ve seen the film star, Conrad Veidt? He’s been in several pictures about queers – well, he was there – very elegant in tails and monocle, with that severe, sensual mouth of his. He didn’t dance, but sat aloof with friends - waving his long ebony cigarette holder languidly... Well, Uncle Henry... That’s enough for tonight, I think.”

(To audience) There’s a lot more I could say about politics and the Nazis - but I know that Uncle isn’t interested in any of that!

SWITCHES OFF THE READING LAMP.

But disrupting the idyllic picture of the Berlin days was the shadow of Hitler and his Nazis, who are steadily gaining votes. There were clashes in the streets - and violent ones between the police and the Communists, and between the Brown Shirts and the Communists. I keep away meetings and rallies but last week in this very street I saw some shocking brutality. I was walking along the Nollendorfstrasse and met a band of Nazis coming back from a political rally. They still had the banners they’d been waving, rolled up with spikes on the end. They suddenly turned on a man who was staring at them.

"That's him!" one shouted.
 And they attacked him.
 They knocked him into the gutter and lunged at him with their
 spiked banners.
 One stabbed him in the eye.
 I doubt if he'd ever see through that eye again.
 A small, curious group gathered to watch - and on the corner
 three policemen stood, fully armed, watching idly.
 I made a note of that in my diary.
 One day there will be a big flare up here, that is certain.
 After Bubi things were different.
 I began to realize how precious and transient things are...
 It was a sobering thought.
 But then there was Otto.
 Otto began as a diversion but became a delight.
 I still have his photograph somewhere.
 He's sixteen: he's incapable of affection or loyalty, though in a
 superficial way he needs me and knows it.
 He and his current "friend" joined some of us on a visit to
 Ruegen Island.
 He loved the naked swimming and football, but tired of fucking
 his friend.
 He left him sitting up at night while he went off to join a group of
 girls at the local dance hall.
 He is quite arrogant and exploitive, of course – a skilled fuck.
 But he has charm and the bloom of youth.
 I made my usual notes: **(Reads)** "Otto has a face like a very
 ripe peach.
 His hair is thick, like his penis and he has small sparkling eyes
 and a disarming grin - much too innocent to be true.
 He moves fluidly, effortlessly with the unconscious grace of a
 cruel, elegant animal..."
(To audience) I suppose his main attraction is his... well...
 energy - his immense zest for life - for eating, for fucking,
 anything that doesn't entail work.
 He loves watching movies - me too!
 Once, watching a picture about a psychotic killer he said...

(In OTTO'S voice with German accent) Thank God,
 Christoph, that we're both normal!

(To audience) Back in Berlin, Otto asked me to live with him.
 His mother has tuberculosis and needs the money.

(In OTTO'S voice, cheekily) It would be *fun* to be together,
 Christoph.

ISHERWOOD PICKS UP A SMALL SUITCASE AND MOVES TO ANOTHER AREA.

(Looking up) I stood in the street looking up at a tenement building.

Otto's family lived on the fifth floor in the attics.

I climbed up and...

(He knocks) Otto's mother opened the door and as I pushed it open to get my case inside I nearly knocked a frying pan off the stove.

The kitchen was so small it seemed crowded with just the two of us.

No where to relax.

Just room for beds.

If I want to relieve myself before sleeping, I have to grope my way through the dark living-room, trying not to jolt the Nowaks' bed, or knock into the furniture.

Or wake Grete and Lothar, his brother and sister who share a bed.

Then I have to creep through the kitchen and down a flight of stairs to the lavatory used by four flats.

The first night I wakened Frau Nowak who whispered...

(In FRAU NOWAK'S voice in German accent) Herr Christoph!

There's a bucket by the stove.

Use that!

Lothar does!

(To audience) Lothar's in the Hitlerjugend.

That's no surprise, for it's mainly from the down and out that Hitler and his gang draw their supporters.

He thinks I'm a degenerate foreigner, which I suppose I am.

I gave Frau Nowak some money and she bought a huge amount of potatoes and a pig's head and heaped my plate.

I don't suppose you've heard of this delicacy - it's sheep's or is it cow's lungs?

(Taking books under his arm) I'm going to start my English lessons soon.

I've three pupils lined up, and fortunately I'll be going to their houses for the lessons.

LIGHT CHANGE.

I suppose I'm weak, but a month at the Nowaks was as much as I could take.

I began looking for another room and found a good one on the Nollendorfstrasse.

Then one day, unexpectedly, Otto came to see me.

I knew something was wrong.

He smiled and hesitated, then said...

(In OTTO's voice) Christoph, I have met a very nice girl. She's in the B'madchen.

(To OTTO) I suppose you're in love with her?

(In OTTO's voice) Yes, Christoph.

I am sorry.

(To audience) What I could say?

It had to happen one day.

(To OTTO. He takes off his wristwatch) Here!

A present to remember me by...

(To audience) He kissed me so gently, so tenderly...

I felt a sudden wave of despair... blank despair.

The warmth of his body, the smell of his hair.

But I smiled a Repton smile – a defeated cricket captain smile and watched him walk jauntily down the street.

Was she waiting around the corner?

(He turns to look) I almost felt she was.

(He turns back) So I turned back to my novel - that was the only thing I could do.

As soon as I moved to Fraulein Thurau's I felt an instant rapport with the place.

This place is all I imagined of Berlin - heavy oak furniture, and tall tiled stove in the corner, the wash stand's like a Gothic shrine.

Then there's a huge cupboard with stained glass windows.

On one there's the King of Prussia and the other Bismark.

And there, look on the mantelpiece - a little silverplate dolphin supporting a gilt clock on its flicked up tail.

There's Bobby, the barman upstairs and Ingrid, an old made-up actress who walks the streets at night.

Then in the room at the top is Fraulein Kost with frizzy blonde hair and usually seen in a scarlet Chinese dressing gown.

She entertains a few men discreetly at night, and Fraulein Thureau turns a blind eye.

Characters!

Characters!

Enough to fill a novel, or half a dozen stories!

Of course, I have to live, and as usual old Uncle Henry's cheque is late.

But there's enough to pay Fraulein Thureau.

I've already documented her in my notes.

She spells "Berlin" for me - and I don't want to lose any nuance.

(Reads) "All day long she goes padding about the large dingy flat.

Shapeless but alert, she waddles from room to room, in carpet slippers and a flowered dressing-gown, pinned ingeniously together, so that not an inch of petticoat or bodice is to be seen, flicking with her duster, peeping, spying, poking her short pointed nose into the cupboards and luggage of her lodgers. She has dark, bright, inquisitive eyes and pretty waved brown hair, of which she is proud.

She must be about... fifty.

She had once owned the whole flat - but inflation and rising prices had eaten up her small resources and now every room was let - even her own bed-sitting room.

She now sleeps in the living room at night, on an old brocade sofa.

This makes it difficult for her tenants to use the lavatory at night, as they have to go through her room.

Already I've started teaching my students.

Fortunately it's fashionable to learn English here.

Some students want to read things like Huxley in the original - one's learning for business purposes, and Hippie Bernstein, who's due to come now, just fancies the idea of learning English and enjoys talking to me.

So long as she pays me, I don't complain.

But I always feel as though I'm cheating her.

Hippie is plump, with a mass of curly chestnut hair and a well-formed bust.

Her family lives in the Grunewald, a millionaire's district, in a house protected by security fences and savage dogs.

It's an architect's dream - a cubist steel and glass box - full of expensive decor and minimalist sculpture.

Sometimes. I give lessons there and lunch with the family.

Hippie usually brings me food - fruit or chocolate.

My first lesson with Hippie went something like this...

(In HIPPI'S voice, with a German accent) Why you come to Germany, Herr Christoph?

(To HIPPI) It's a very interesting country - politics, the economy and so on...

(In HIPPI'S voice) You know some nice girls?

(To HIPPI) Yes, well, there's one who lives **(points upwards)** upstairs.

(In HIPPI'S voice) I don't see her when I come.

(To HIPPI) She's usually asleep, Hippi.

(In HIPPI'S voice) Do you not know no nice students?

(To HIPPI) *Some* students... and say "*Don't*" in conversation.

(In HIPPI'S voice) *Don't* **(pause)** Yes?
Don't you think some English girls more nice than German girls?

(To HIPPI) *Nicer than ...*

(In HIPPI'S voice) Don't you not eat some fruit and some chocolate?

Why?

(To audience) I was beginning to understand a little about Germany.

I watched the Berlin scene and wrote my stories.

And here... at Fraulein Thureau's I met *Jean...*

Jean Ross!

She was nineteen then, but I thought she was twenty-five at least.

She was slim and moved with an easy grace.

She had a long oval face, very pale and powdered white.

Dark waved hair, a shade darker than her eyes, which were very large and brown, under pencilled eyebrows.

Very sophisticated looking - at first glance anyway.

Under all this Jean was fairly naive.

She had on a slinky black silk frock with a tiny cape and one of those jaunty little pill-box hats a bit to one side.

(He holds up his hands) She had beautiful hands, **(looks at his finger nails)** with bright emerald green fingernails, rather

long and predatory and smoked thin black cigarettes with silver tips incessantly.

(He reclines on a sofa) Her favourite pose was to lie stretched out on a sofa, anybody's sofa would do, or to curl up in an easy chair with a fair show of silk stockinged legs, **(kicks off shoes)** kicking off her small, high-heeled shoes.

Jean's aim was to be as seductive as possible to as many men as possible, and by and large she succeeded.

Most of her conquests seemed to slip away into the shadows.

Her lovers were either *fabulously* rich or about to become famous film directors - they were all, it seemed, bent on launching Jean in the movies.

But at the crucial moment they had the habit of folding their tents like Arabs and stealing *noiselessly* away leaving fading bouquets and half-eaten boxes of chocolates.

And of course, memories of *extravagant* dinners at the Adlon Hotel, followed by passionate sessions in Jean's gloomy room.

Jean provided me with *endless* entertainment and the best story of my book - "Goodbye to Berlin".

But there was only one consistent thing about Jean and that was her unpredictability.

Her first words to me were...

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) Can I use your telephone sweet?

(To audience) And she then proceeded to have an intimate conversation with some man, interspersing her dialogue with "liebling" or "du Schwein".

Jean always addressed people as "Du" - she seemed incapable of learning the second person plural.

I made as if to retreat to the kitchen but she said....

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) Don't leave me alone with Kaspar - he's so passionate, he'd seduce me over the telephone!

(To audience) So I watched her pursing up her brilliant cherry lips and practically kissing the mouthpiece and cooing...

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice, speaking into telephone) "Hilloo!

Was wollen wir machen Morgen Abend?

Oh wie wunderbar, libeling...

Nein, nein, Kaspar ich werde bleiben zu Hause Heute Abend.

(She puts her hand over the receiver and whispers to CHRISTOPHER) That's the man I slept with last night.

He's *absolutely* gorgeous.

He makes love *marvellously*, *fabulously* rich.

A whiz at business, too."

(Speaking back into the telephone receiver) Wierkliche, lieblich ...
Ya, ya fabelhaft.
Wiederseh'n, sweet..."

HANGS UP THE RECEIVER PLEASED.

(To audience) They were all like that - at first anyhow.

Jean picked most of her lovers up at the 'Lady Windermere' just off the Tauentzeinstrasse, a sleazy area, a sort of imitation Montparnasse.

She pressed me to come and see her and I went with Spender who was in Berlin at the time.

We wandered into the 'Windermere' about midnight and there was Jean standing on a platform with a beautiful blond young man playing nostalgic songs on a grand piano. Overhead was a huge illuminated fan which was the trademark of the place.

She stood relaxed with her hands hanging limp singing in a husky expressionless voice.

She sang in English, which was popular, but sometimes... in French and very poor German.

LIGHTS DIM. CABERET EFFECTS.THE FAN LIGHTS ON AND OFF. JEAN SINGS: "BODY AND SOUL". WE HEAR LIMP APPLAUSE AND A FEW CALLS OF 'ENCORE'.

She swept to our table, embraced us both quickly and went off with an elderly gentleman and sat drinking champagne.

Jean was no singer, but her casual air and nonchalant stance gave her performances a *certain* style.

We saw a lot of each other.

She knew about my boys and I consoled her when her lovers left her.

She told me she'd come to Berlin to get work with Ufa Film Productions but she never managed to do it so far.

Fraulein Thureau loved her.

She'd never seen anyone like Jean before.

When I took her around, Fraulein Thureau brought out her best china and served us a dainty tea with little coconut cakes and paper serviettes with perforated edges like lace.

I asked Fraulein once how she liked Jean...

(In FRAULEIN THURAU'S voice, with German accent) Oh, Herr Issyvoo she is a real lady.

So elegant - real English society.

I never thought you'd have a lady-friend like that, Herr Issyvoo. Never.

(To audience) Jean's *favourite* drink was the Prairie Oyster which she prepared herself and pressed on me whenever I felt the need for comfort, or nourishment.

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) It's so simple.
You just take an egg and break it into a glass, like this - look.
Then you add Worcester sauce, not too much, and pepper and salt and stir it.

(To audience, as he does it) She took my fountain pen and swirled it 'round.

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) Try it, darling...

Isn't it wonderful?

(She swallowed hers fast) That'll get me through till I go to "The Windermere".

(To audience) Then Jean found Clive.
He was American and lived at the Adlon Hotel.

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) Darling, you *simply* must meet him.
He's *divine* and *madly* rich.
He's crazy about me and I *absolutely* dote on him.
Clive wined and dined us *and...* **(Winks)** well... you know what I mean...

(Changes subject) He sent his Mercedes around for us every day.

He was planning to take us on a world cruise to Egypt, China, South American, the West Indies - everywhere.

But one day this rich and passionate American... disappeared.
Jean went to the Adlon to lunch only to find his room empty.

(Opening the envelope) He left a small white envelope for her...

(In CLIVE'S voice with American accent) For Chris *and* you, with love – Clive...

(To audience) Just that.
Enclosed inside was five hundred marks!

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) A pair of gold-diggers aren't we?

(Nods, then to audience) Jean took her two hundred to buy some clothes.

The other two hundred and fifty came in handy later.
We blew fifty on a dinner.

Then went on to... **(a la Russian voice)** "The Troika".
But we didn't enjoy it much.

(Pause) Next it was Klaus, the blond pianist with the wavy hair
and beautiful hands, who played for her at the bar...

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) Have you got a cigarette, Chris,
darling?

(To audience, sitting on the bed) Jean sat on the end of my
bed and crossed her slim legs.
It was... **(Checks clock)** ... ten o'clock and I was hardly awake.

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) Listen, Chris - this is *absolutely* the
real thing.
I'm most *terribly* in love.

(To JEAN, yawning widely) Who is it this time?

(To audience) I asked...

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice, puzzled) I thought you realised.
It's Klaus.
You know Klaus?
With those *adorable* strong thighs...

(To JEAN) Oh, him!

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) He's so sweet, so sensitive.
And those hands... they've been places that...
He absolutely adores me!

(CHRISTOPHER laughs) What are you laughing at Chris,
darling?

This is serious.

Oh, I know Klaus will make it.

He's a *divinely* brilliant musician!

I mean, he's only waiting to be discovered and he'll be all the
rage in Paris and London and...

Can't you see, we'll be a *marvellous* pair?

He's simply *breathtaking* in bed...

(To JEAN, going back to sleep) Really?

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) Don't go to sleep again, Chris, darling...
 Listen...
 I'm in love, truly and forever.
 It's the most... the most... *incredible* feeling.
 Chris!
 It's happened!

(To JEAN sitting up) Get me a cup of coffee, Jean, please...
 And *then* you can tell me all about it.

(To audience) I sat up and fumbled for a cigarette

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) Look darling, he gave me this beautiful lighter.

(Holds up a silver cigarette lighter) Isn't it the *sweetest* thing?
 And engraved solid silver...

(To audience) And now blond genius was in London.
 He'd had an offer from a film company to synchronise music for a picture set in Germany...

"The Student Prince" and all that romantic stuff – popular at the time.

Well, anyway, Fraulein Thurau, took a great interest in the whole affair, brought up his **(holding up the letter in the air)** first letter with triumph.

Klaus didn't like England much and missed Jean.

He told Jean she must work hard and save money in the meantime.

So, Jean made use of her talent... and furthered her career - as a singer.

Of course, he said, he still *adored* her and she was always in his thoughts.

There was quite a gap until the second letter arrived.

(Waving the letter madly) Jean stormed in...

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) Do you know what this swine's gone and done?

(Quick aside to audience) I knew it was a flag of distress.

(To JEAN) What swine?

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) Klaus, idiot!
 Listen!

(Reads) Meine liebes, armes kind, I know this will upset you but I've decided we must part..."

(To CHRISTOPHER) There's a lot more about work and so on.

(To audience) Then the stab in the back...

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) He's met an English girl at Lady Somebody's party and she's related to a lord and he's never met anyone who understands his mind like she does.

Christ!

I never knew had a mind!

(Upset) Of course she's filthy rich – no, he doesn't say so, but she must be.

(To JEAN) Sit down...

I'll make you a Prairie Oyster!

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) Actually, I'm sorry for him.

His work's bound to suffer.

He'll just fritter his talents away with her.

A taste of society's gone to the poor boy's head.

Miss Eckersley-Gore, indeed.

(Crying) I can see her - presented at court, riding to hounds.

What a farce!

(To JEAN) Don't cry, Jean, don't cry...

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) But those thighs, those...

(To JEAN) He's not worth it.

(An idea) Let's go to the pictures?

There's a new Leni Riefenstahl on at the Kino, "Der Heilige Berg"...

Come on, get dressed up, we'll go to a matinee.

Drink up.

That's better.

And tomorrow we can see another picture and another...

There's one I keep meaning to go to: "Die Traumende Mund".

It's supposed to be simply wonderful.

Elizabeth Bergner.

You'd like her.

I've got some money - we'll have a sort of orgy!

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) You're so *marvellous* to me, Chris.
 I could easily fall in love with you.
 What a pity we can't even make love, darling, there's nothing
 else to do till the rain stops.

(To audience) She had infinite charm.
 I could almost see myself falling in love with her.
 Last year when I was tutoring in England during the vacation, I
 was in the same situation.
 There was an attractive, sexy woman, appalling weather and a
 lot to drink.
 She was the divorced mother of my student.
 We played cards, we drank, we talked and finally I kissed her,
 without thinking, really.
 When she responded, I thought how easy it was - the same
 holds, the same movements - and a novel sensation... like
 playing a new game.
 I was excited by myself getting aroused in this way.
 After the orgasm I wanted to go on and on...
 To take our clothes off and spend the night together.
 But she wouldn't.
 Jean said:

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) I can see you've had a lot of
 experience, Chris.

(To audience and himself) I asked myself: do I want more of
 this?
 Why do I like boys better?
 Of course, I like their shape and smell and in a way they're
 more romantic.
 Romantic?
 Yes, they are.
 Girls are beautiful but never romantic.

They're practical, sensible.
 They have after thoughts.

(Starts to pace up and down) I can't invent my myth about
 girls.
 True.
 But if could get to like them, my life would be so much easier.
 Kathleen's willing me to do this... get married, breed... get in
 step.
 The whole establishment demands it - the church, the medical
 profession the law!
 Well, damn the law!

Damn society!
 Damn girls!
 Damn nearly everybody.
 All I know is, if boys didn't exist, I'd have to invent them!

(IN JEAN ROSS'S voice) Chris!
 What are you doing?
 Put that glass down - or fill it up!
 Stop pacing about!
 Why don't you make some coffee?
 Come on.
 Put a record on the gramophone and we'll dance!

MUSIC IS HEARD FROM EITHER THE GRAMPHONE OR SHIP SALOON.

(Calls) Wystan!
 Wystan!
 Come and look at this!

HE WAITS FOR A REPLY THEN HIS THOUGHTS DRIFT OFF AGAIN.

(To audience) Mourning for Klaus lasted about a... week!
 Then Jean made a few futile efforts to get film work, and did a few unsuccessful auditions for musicals.
 We used to walk to the Wittenbergplatz and sit on a bench in the winter sun and watch the people go by.
(He sits and watches people pass) She was wrapped up in a rather mangy fur coat with her bright yellow beret on the side of her head and people stared at her.
 She was really very lovely.
 So... we sat and Jean dreamed of record-breaking sales for me and a *dazzling* career for herself in London, supper parties at the Ritz, fan-mail, contracts and her photograph in "The Daily Mail".
 But none of this happened quite like Jean imagined.
 She did in fact get one or two parts in a crowd scenes for Ufa Films - in one, she told me she was in a gondola in Venice and supposed to be making passionate love.
 She came back laughing...

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice, laughing) Chris, darling!
 We actually did it!
 The whole thing!
 For real!
 Just wait till you see it!

(To audience) But in the finished film her shot was cut out. Then one day she came back after an early shoot looking very tired and pale. When I offered her a Prairie Oyster she made a dash for the bathroom and vomited. It was, of course, the disaster she'd hoped wouldn't happen.

(To JEAN) Listen Jean. You must write to Klaus, it is his, isn't it?

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) Yes, of course it is, darling...

(To audience) But nothing would make her do this. Fraulein Thureau had a little chat with Fraulein Kost, of the Chinese kimono, and together they found the right man. It would cost two fifty marks! So that was the end of Clive's guilt money!

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) Darling, you will say it's yours, won't you?

(To JEAN) Of course, Jean, darling.

(In JEAN ROSS'S voice) I mean you don't have to say we're married.

(To audience) When it was all over, Jean came back looking off colour and very ill. Fraulein Thureau made onion soup with chunks of wurst and Fraulein Kost brought flowers. When she recovered, Jean said she was going back to England.

LIGHT CHANGE.

(Calls) Wystan!
Come and look at this!
I can just see New York.

(In WYSTAN'S voice) Where!?

(To WYSTAN, squinting) Look there!
It's the skyline.
The old Indian city - Manhattan

(In WYSTAN'S voice) I can't see a bloody thing!

(To WYSTAN) That's because you're short sighted.
I can see it quite plainly
I think I can pick out the Singer Building.

(In WYSTAN'S voice) You're imagining it.
It's just the mist.

(To WYSTAN) Anyhow, why don't we go and get a drink now?

(In WYSTAN'S voice) Because the bar's been closed for hours.
Otherwise I'd be sitting there now.
I need a bit more brandy to rub on my chilblains.
They're still giving me hell!

(To audience) He went off below again.
And still I couldn't leave Berlin.
The future wasn't real yet.
Only the past.
So... life in Berlin went on...
All the time Hitler was growing in power, and more people felt threatened.
Now he's been voted in with a sizeable number of seats and Hindenberg has appointed him his "Chancellor."
Now it's Charlie Chaplin and Father Christmas in power.
Meanwhile, I met Heinz.
Heinz had tight curly hair, a thick mouth and a flattened nose - he had it broken long ago.
But I felt a strong and fierce attraction to him.
Unlike Otto and Bubi he responded to my feelings and he became my friend, lover and companion for several years.
We travelled together sometimes for pleasure, sometimes to escape surveillance at home.
For by now the Nazis were actively tracking down homosexuals and sending them to concentration camps.
The streets were full of SS men striding about in their uniforms and pushing others off the pavements.
And Heinz was not only queer, but a communist – with a police record.
Somehow I had to get him out of Germany.
Belgium was the obvious place.
Some of those targetted by the Nazis had slipped over the border.
Then perhaps he could apply for a change of nationality and get a new passport.

It was then I ran into Francis again.
 He'd been abroad for ages.
 He told me he'd bought a Greek island.
 He invited Heinz and myself to join him there.
 Surely the long arm of the Gestapo wouldn't reach over the
 Adriatic?
 Heinz was wildly excited by the idea and we set off in a
 lighthearted mood.
 Francis met us off the boat at Athens.
 I asked him if he was working on any archeological projects...

(To FRANCIS) I seem to remember seeing you at a lecture long
 ago at Cambridge.
 King's, wasn't it?

(In FRANCIS' voice) Trinity.
 A lecture on the Machu Picchu ruins.
 I lent you a book on Aztec costumes.

(To FRANCIS) I hope I returned it.

(In FRANCIS' voice) No, you didn't!
 Don't worry.
 It couldn't matter less.
 Why didn't you say so before?

(To FRANCIS) I wasn't sure you'd want to be reminded of it.

(In FRANCIS' voice) What nonsense!
(Offering his a cigarette) Have a fag.

(To audience as he lights cigarette) His hand shook as he
 fumbled over the matches...

(In FRANCIS' voice) Anyhow it doesn't matter.
 I've finished classical digs and I'm sick of Berlin.
 I'm dead for all practical purposes.
 You aren't, I can see that.
 Now, I'll get you some blankets at the Thieves Market - we're
 camping out, you know.
 I suppose you ought to see the Acropolis.

I always think it's a good thing to get that over as soon as
 possible!

This is a portion of the play. To request a complete reading copy, please use the contact information on [the Lost information page](#).