Karlheinz Moll



SHOOTER The Depth of the Pain





The 1st Alexander Granger Novel



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EGO SHOOTER

The Depth of the Pain

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Prologue I

Zero Hour - Bison Range, St. Ignatius, Montana

e parked his car on the top of a small hump in an area shadowed by trees. He checked that the car was out of sight from other visitors that might pass through this secluded section of the park that early in the day. He grabbed his equipment out of the trunk. Time to get started.

The grass on the surrounding hills was still drying out and had already taken on a yellowish color as it usually did at that time of the year. His location was halfway through the Bison Range where only a one-way dirt road exists, if one followed the rules, which he still did to remain invisible. He remembered the sign at the entrance which told the history and background of the park. The Bison Range was opened in 1908 as a last resort for some of the remaining buffaloes which survived the slaughter after the Civil War that swept through the prairie states where an estimated 30 to 60 million animals once roamed.

About 500 animals roam the reserve today, he recalled back from the first time he visited the park a long time ago. Just a few feet below the peak of one of the rolling hills a sandy grove provided a shady place for a buffalo who must have wandered a bit away from the main herd. Maybe it was an older specimen, could be 10 or 12 years old. Maybe

it was sick, he thought, although it did not look sick from a distance. The breath of the mighty animal blown through its nostrils was visible in the cool morning air. The bison was at least 70-inch-tall and probably weighed 2000 pounds. It stood there stamping its right front hoof into the sandy ground. The animal did not hear any of his movements at the border of the preserve in a small array of pine trees. This was no surprise as there was no way the buffalo could hear anything from the underbrush more than half a mile away.

He took careful, smooth steps all the way to prevent being heard or noticed, not that there was anyone in close range. He wore a German army parka, camouflage pants and black hiking boots, like a game hunter only it was the wrong time of the year.

For a second he lost his focus and trod on an old twig that was lying on the forest floor among a few dried pine needles. A dark brown squirrel interrupted its search for food on the ground and fled up the nearest tree. It realized that in a different situation it could have all been over right there but not this time, so it could not care less who was wandering between through the trees.

When he reached the rim of the treed area he knelt into the grassy boundary of the forest which was still a bit wet from the morning mist. He took off his parka and laid it on the grass and then he removed a small rucksack he was carrying underneath placing it on top of the parka. Without knowing it, nobody would have guessed that he was carrying anything at all under the parka not least a rucksack.

He emptied the rucksack, put the pieces on the laid-out parka and started assembling them. Once he had fully assembled the gun, he inserted a 10-round magazine. He lifted the gun and pointed it toward the grassy hill where the big buffalo was roaming. He found the animal in the scope and centered the crosshairs on its mighty head. He put his index finger on the trigger and pulled it. No noise was heard except the click of the trigger. Quite simply, because the gun was still put on safety and he had no intention of killing the bison. It was the right place and the right time and the wrong victim, but he needed final confirmation, that he was ready to do what he intended to do. Munich was a successful dry run, but tomorrow it would really begin. He was at the end of a journey...and the beginning of another.

Prologue II

10 years ago - Missoula, Montana

s his parents left the driveway he was standing on the lawn waving at them. He could see his mother still waving back at him when the car was turning onto the main highway. He walked back to the house through the terrace.

Seen from the outside, the old ranch-style home was in desperate need of some fixing up and even more of paint, and the interior showed equal signs of wear and tear. The family obviously did not care much about appearance and probably had not had visitors in a long time.

He went to his room and grabbed the heavy bag hidden well under the bed as he knew his mother only swept the floor without bending down to reach.

It was starting to rain as it so often did that time of year, so he took his long coat, a western style duster, which fulfilled two tasks. It provided protection from the rain and it allowed him to hide some items he wanted to keep out of sight at least for now. He walked to the door and turned back once more. He figured it would be the last time that he would see the place that had been home all of his life. The rain was gaining strength, and it was now very heavy, but he didn't mind. He walked stoically down the road.

His mind was drifting away and he started remembering things which happened on this very road, which he thought he had long forgotten.

The first day his father took him to pre-school.

The day he was beaten heavily by his two bully classmates outside the school and he fell hard on the pavement and his mother came running to stop the blood that ran out of a big hole at the back of his head.

The first day the voice in his head started talking to him.

The first day of high school, which neither his parents nor his teachers believed that he would make it in.

The day he brought home his first video game which opened a complete new world for him.

The day he got his best game ever.

The day he acquired the things he carried in his bag now.

It was a rather long walk for someone who never lived there or who expected that the next yellow bus stop would just be minutes away. But not here in the outskirts of Missoula. It was almost 3 miles from his home but for him it was routine. He walked the same distance until he first was allowed to drive his father's run-down car at the age of sixteen, but he rarely was able to take his father's car, except the other weekend when his parents were gone and he drove to Wickenburg, Arizona.

The rain was still coming down strong but the duster held up to its promises and kept him dry underneath. A car passed him, honking twice. He didn't look up or take notice, as he was not interested in who it may have been. Maybe one of the neighbors saw him in his favorite rain coat. He didn't give it much thought. His mind was already focused on what was going to happen next, mentally preparing for what he had to do. He played it out in his head like he already had done many times before.

He sped up after he checked the time. He had a bus to catch.

What had begun as yet another quiet day in Montana would become the bloodiest day in modern state history before it was over.

Chapter 1

The Present: Day 1 - Missoula, Montana

e looked again at the summary notes containing all the details he considered important about the life of David Wolferding. He had obtained these from publicly available resources, mostly internet searches.

Following David's tracks was easy. He was born and raised in Missoula. He was 52 years old now, married and had three kids. Two of the kids were studying at the University of Montana here in Missoula and the other one attended High School in town. As he quickly found out, David seemed to enjoy having his children close to his work as they frequently met for lunch on campus or in town. If David got out of the office at regular hours he picked up the kids and they drove home together.

It was that type of small town life that might have brought him back to Missoula many years ago, he thought, probably with less money and responsibility than he was accustomed to in his former job overseas.

He followed David around a few times when he left the office or his home to get accustomed to his every move. For a few years now, David had lived in a large three-story home on a 10-acre estate down on Rattlesnake Creek that he had inherited from his father, all easily discovered

through a few web searches. He ensured that the profile on David Wolferding that he had pieced together more than a year ago was still valid, particularly that his habits had not changed.

He had also checked out the terrain of the Rattlesnake Creek area and the vicinity around where David Wolferding lived. It was a small hill next to Mt. Jumbo where he found his perfect spot. He drew up a mental list of his arsenal of guns and ammunition and selected the perfect weapon for the occasion.

In a small hut out of town, which he used as his hideout, he packed the gun, the ammunition and other equipment into a sporting bag. Next, he took a sharp nail out of his tool box which he figured would be a good tool for scratching numbers into metal jackets. He loaded everything in the trunk of a car and covered it with a blanket. Tomorrow would be day. He was ready and prepared.

Chapter 2

The Present: Day 2 - Missoula, Montana

he Missoula office of Montana Wealth Management Bank, known in town as MWB, which is the Montana branch of USA Wealth Management Bank located in Phoenix, Arizona which is in turn a branch of the Global Wealth Management Bank headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland is located in a historic late 19th Century brick building. The bank itself looks like many small but still flourishing financial institutions in rural America.

There may be Google and Apple and all those Fin Tech companies, but in small town America banking quite often still consists of processing and cashing checks, opening savings accounts, issuing credit cards and providing loans. MBW in Missoula was breaking out of this tradition a bit, offering banking to the rich.

The clients of the bank here are not just local ranchers or entrepreneurs and companies in the lumber or mining business but wealthy families and individuals who had already made it. They have either retired to the west or use it as temporary retreat from their hectic business ventures now and then. MWB clients are considered among the richest 1% of Montana and the bordering states of Idaho and Wyoming, many of them owning vast portions of prime properties and ranches in the region. MWB offers global

investments for all those hardearned Dollars, but despite all the wealth managed by the bank, there was still no elevator in the brick building erected in 1902.

David has held the position as branch manager and local CEO for the past 8 years when Global Wealth Management Bank bought the bank, its assets, clients and the building from the previous owners. The former owners are one of the leading families in town and now one of the biggest clients of the bank.

Under normal conditions David would have worked overtime to clear his inbox and sign all the documents in his in-tray and his family would have expected it, but this was not a normal day for him. It was his wedding anniversary and he knew there would be hell to pay if he showed up late today when his wife of 30 years was preparing that 'surprise' party with all their friends waiting, so he called it a day and went downstairs to the parking lot. There was not much business going on right now as the many empty parking spaces indicated. He unlocked his car and put his briefcase and laptop on the back seat. He turned down the rooftop of the convertible as he did when he was in the car on his own.

David enjoyed the late afternoon sun which warmed up his face as well as his mood. He took Van Buren Road towards Rattlesnake Creek, and in just another 20 minutes or so he would be home. Rush hour in Missoula only delayed the trip home by a few minutes.

He had the radio on and was whistling along to the Elmer Bernstein theme from the 'Magnificent Seven' and imagined himself riding home on horseback when life left his face. A massive frontal pressure snapped back his head which was almost ripped off from his shoulders. His car drove off the street out of control and rushed down the hill until it came to a natural halt in Rattlesnake Creek. The water of the river was not very deep at that time of the year but the strong current pulled the car further down the river until it collided with a large stone, not that it would worry David much. He was dead as soon as he was hit. The large bullet hole in his forehead left no doubt that this was not a car accident.

Chapter 3

The Present: Day 2 - Missoula, Montana

wo young people found the car and the body in it jogging alongside Rattlesnake Creek and one of them called 911 on their cell phone. Missoula police arrived in no time. Within the hour the full force of the fire department, coroner and detectives from city police arrived and got to work. Lt. Detective Doug Mills, a veteran on the local police force was put in charge.

"What exactly happened?" Lt. Mills asked police Sergeant Sam Caffey, who, like Lt. Mills had spent a long time as a patrolman.

"From all we know so far, the victim, David Wolferding who lived just down the road was shot in the head then his car veered off the road and ended up in the creek" Sam Caffey answered.

"What about the shooter?" Doug went on.

"That is the million Dollar question" he said. "No shot was heard and nobody was seen nearby. But that should not be much of a surprise" he continued "looking at what was left of the victim's head and what the coroner could tell so far, the shot came from a long way away and the caliber used would have killed a rhino."

"Sniper?" Doug asked curiously.

"Probably" Sam replied.

"Big game hunting in Missoula and the hunting season has not even started" Mills said sarcastically. "Well, let's get the ball rolling...we need the full program; close the whole area, at least 500 meters in each direction. If this was a professional hit, I doubt we will find any usable footprints, the cartridge or anything else but we better not take any chances. From the bits I heard it sure looks like a professional hit to me" he went on, addressing Sam Caffey and the other police staff standing close by before adding "But why here; why him? It's going to be a long day... maybe a long night too" he went on murmuring to himself.

Indeed, it took all night to piece together the few parts of the forensic puzzle they had at their disposal. Undoubtedly, David Wolferding was shot from a considerable distance. From the traces on his car, the angle of the gunshot wound and the body position, the shot must have been fired from somewhere between here and Mt. Jumbo. The Missoula police department's preliminary conclusion was that it was most likely a single shooter. They had no idea about a motive yet. For that it was way too soon.

They already had an initial set of information on the gun though from the bullet splinters the coroner found in the skull of the victim. The bullet was a massive caliber, which was only used in assault rifles. From the type of wound on what was left of it, there was little doubt that a sniper rifle had been used to almost blow the victim's head off.

The following days would be spent trying to find out why David Wolferding was killed and maybe a clue to the person who did it. Knowledge about the type of weapon might be helpful, as even in Big Sky country, where gun ownership is widely spread, a sniper rifle was rather uncommon and hard to find, except maybe amongst preppers or alt-right lunatics.

While Doug and Sam spent most of the night in the office working, the search at the crime scene paused and recommenced at daybreak.

Missoula police searched the compound from where they considered the shot may have been fired. They did not find anything at this, the first place they tried and so moved further and further away until they could barely see the wrecked car in the Rattlesnake Creek.

After almost two hours of relentless searching without result they called in for two K-9 dogs trained to find gun powder. The two German shepherds did not find anything where their handlers put them but they detected something further away. The handlers let the two dogs off the leash and off they went. The policemen could barely follow the animals that undoubtedly were on to something, until they stopped and signaled to the handlers with a bark.

Once the police crew reached the dogs and they were certain that they had found the right spot, they got on the radio and called in Doug Mills and Sam Caffey who were still downtown sipping strong, hot coffee to counteract the effects of a sleepless night.

Although Doug Mills was anything but an ordinary police veteran and those who did not know him would have considered him a born and bred this was nowhere near the truth. He had had an illustrious career in other fields before joining law enforcement. In the late 1970s he tried his luck in the oil business, buying and selling potentially lucrative land properties where geologists believed that oil might be found. He never worked on rigs or in refineries but he nevertheless became a successful oil manager making him a very wealthy man. In the 1980s he remained in the land business. Instead of oil fields he now traded in large tracts of land, buying whole sections of raw, undeveloped land, sub-dividing it and selling it in parcels ranging from 40 to 160 acres.

This lucrative enterprise increased his already considerable accumulated wealth, but in the late 1980s he had a different kind of mid-life crisis. He was doing some soul-searching and found religion when one day he ran into Sam Caffey again, his old high school buddy. A few months later he sold his business and joined the Missoula police force.

He was considered smart as a whip and an excellent investigator. After a few years, he had climbed up the ranks and with strong support from the former chief, Kevin Granger, he became one of the most successful detectives in Montana with a renowned track record of cases solved. He even surpassed his friend and colleague Sam Caffey in ranks and a bit less than 2 years ago he had taken the reins from his predecessor. But it never mattered to their friendship in all these years and it had particularly no meaning today. They were a team and relied heavily on each other. Both were close to a well-deserved retirement.

This was one time they would not be dreaming about flyfishing and spending time in a rocking chair as they joked about frequently together. Now they were alert and their thoughts were concentrated on the case at hand. Their drive to the sniper's spot took them along Rattlesnake Creek. Both thought about the victim and the car in the creek and the circumstances leading to the death of David Wolferding. Both realized that this would not be an everyday homicide. On the way they discussed it in the car.

"What is the matter with Missoula?" Doug asked, borrowing the old narrative on Kansas from William Allen White back in 1896 and applying it to modern Missoula.

"No idea" Sam replied. "Yesterday we were considered to be one of the last safe places left in an otherwise crazy world; today we are making headlines with some sniper shooting off a man's head in a way we thought only existed in movies."

"There it is" Sam said when they reached the highest point that the improvised dirt road on Mt. Jumbo let them drive realizing that they had to walk the remaining distance. They couldn't believe how far away there were from Rattlesnake Creek.

"What would I do without you" Doug responded like Oliver Hardy thanking Stan Laurel for getting him into another fine mess.

"I love you too" Sam shot back. Sam Caffey was a short stocky type of guy but what he did not have in height he made up for wits. He too had tried his hand at real estate in his early 20s but had quickly swapped his broker's license for a badge and remained in the force ever since. Lt. Detective Kevin Granger had taken him under his wing and shown him the ropes. Sam never considered himself a career policeman but he nevertheless had climbed up the ranks over the years. He was a Sergeant by the time he

lured his pal Doug Mills into the service and they quickly became inseparable as partners after Kevin Granger was promoted to chief of police.

Sam rather enjoyed his leisure time hiking and charging around on his ATV in the hills surrounding Missoula. He liked it the easy way and had no big career ambitions whereas Doug went to night school quickly closed in on Sam's rank and ultimately surpassed him.

The two detectives climbed up the grassy hill where the search team already waited, both of them breathing heavily from the exercise. It seemed incredible that they were almost 2 kilometers away from the car of the victim. From their vantage point they had a beautiful view over the whole valley with Missoula in the middle of it. However, for obvious reasons, their focus clearly was on the crime scene. Whoever did the shooting must be a heck of a shot and must have had a heck of a gun Doug and Sam both concluded without saying a word.

A bit further ahead they saw the dogs still excited about what they found. Sam scanned the areal. A few shoe prints were visible and there was a lot of trampled grass. He figured that most of it had come from his colleagues and that little useful evidence might be found at the shooting scene.

Meanwhile Doug saw something shining in the grass. He bent down to get a closer look at what looked like a cartridge case. He was looking at the stump of an old, dying tree where a golden metal piece was shining in the sun. Sure enough it was an empty cartridge which had been placed on a stone like a trophy and was definitely left there to be found. The crime scene photographer took a

few more pictures before he gave Doug a signal that he could lift it from its place on the stone. He took a pen out of his shirt pocket to pick-up the cartridge and held it up in the light. Both, Doug and Sam examined it closely. They had seen a lot of cartridges in their time but nothing like this. They also had certainly heard of .50 Browning calibers but actually seeing and holding a cartridge from it and the damage the bullet had done to a human being from such a huge distance was something completely different.

Although they knew very little at this stage they already realized that this was not their everyday shooter who runs amok. They also had a feeling that this might not have been the first such case and probably would not the last.

"Our friends from the FBI are sure going to have a field day with this." said Sam.

"They will be all over this place showing us country boys how crimes are really solved." Doug chuckled in response.

"Yeah, before we know it, they will find a strange connection between whoever is behind this shooting and Lee Harvey Oswald" Sam replied picking up on the joking. "Maybe it will turn out our guy was the shooter on the grassy knoll in Dallas" he added.

"Or maybe he believes he is one of those super villains straight out of a comic book...you know...like the Punisher or...what's his name...Deathstroke. We'll see when we catch him, whenever that is" Doug said. "Wait a minute. What have we got here?" he suddenly asked, pointing out something on the cartridge to Sam.

The cartridge had an engraving which was no doubt manmade. A cursory glance may have dismissed the engraving as scratches, but not this time. Doug and Sam were being meticulous, and were examining what little evidence they had with utmost care. Sam could read the engraving. It said '9/10'. They had no idea yet what this could mean. In fact, it could mean almost anything.

"9 out of 10? One day before 9/11? October, the 9th? Or something else? What can it be? Want to take an educated guess?" Sam asked looking over to Doug who was equally puzzled. "The only thing I am certain about is that it means something" he added. "Whoever carried a highcaliber gun up to this hill and fired a bullet into the head of man more than a mile away obviously knew what he was doing and did everything purposefully."

The cartridge was sealed in a plastic bag, labelled by the Missoula police force, collected together with some small traces of powder found on some streaks of grass and put together with a detailed report to be sent to the FBI field office in Billings.

Chapter 4

The Present: Day 4- Billings, Montana

he FBI field office was located in downtown Billings in an old police station. Billings was an ideal location for their operation, much better than Helena, the capital.

From Billings, it was a short commute into Colorado or Wyoming, two states where they also provided support. The building had four stories which allowed it to host the data center and laboratory for three states. Forensic evidence and electronic data poured in daily from all over the tristate area concerning everything the FBI was working on or was otherwise considered of federal interest. From there the information was passed on to Quantico or Washington DC for further analysis and processing.

The data and evidence arriving from Missoula was no different. Both were logged and handed down to teams of experts where the evidence at hand underwent the full program, starting from scratch. It was not that they didn't trust the work already done by the Missoula police, but starting anew was standard procedure to ensure nothing was missed or taken for granted. Just like a second pair of eyes looking at the evidence for the first time.

While the evidence was taken apart the case itself was assigned to an available agent with the necessary experience in shooting incidents.

"This is Denise. What's up?" Denise Marceau answered the phone in her office.

"You got mail" the voice on the other end of the line said.

"Paul. How many times do I have to tell you that it would be nice if you at least would start with a hello or something nice" she said smilingly.

"Sorry, no time for roses this time" her colleague Paul responded.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Some guy was shot in Missoula end of last week. Nothing special at first, but then they found out that the man was shot from a long distance, and I mean from a very long distance, over two thousand yards or about 2 kilometers. This wasn't your everyday neighborly dispute settled with a rifle – there was an engraved cartridge found at the place where the shot had apparently been fired from. Forensics is already at it analyzing the stuff Missoula PD sent. Rest is up to you. Good luck and keep me posted." Paul Mullen said in his function as local director of the Billings office.

Denise had thick, dark and shiny black hair which was cut short, very short. She preferred dressing in pants and shirts. Nobody at the Billings office could recall ever seeing her in a skirt or anything else close. She did not always succeed in hiding her well-proportioned figure even though she tried hard. Male colleagues who teased her about her boyish attire only tried it once. She could defend herself with her sharp tongue equally as well with her bare hands. She was a local star in the Montana field office of the FBI. Her investigative skills surpassed any standards. Although she was top of her class, and had a folder full of recommendations and credentials would have opened any doors she wanted, she had chosen Billings, Montana.

Her superior officer felt blessed but he never believed her story about wanting to be out of town. On the other hand, he never complained about it. She was here and gave her very best. Why she was here and what she was doing here was none of his business.

She was born to an American father and a Canadian mother hence the French name. They lived in New York City most of the time where her father walked his beat in an upscale neighborhood while her mother worked part time at an auction house in Brooklyn. She spent all her summers in her mother's Canadian hometown just outside Montreal. While others watched the Disney channel as a child she followed Law & Order as soon as her parents considered her old enough to watch a crime show. In high school and later in college she had never had any doubts what she wanted to be. Being a cop was her teenage dream and she joined the police academy while still in college. Her tutors and instructors did not need much convincing to realize her talents and before long the FBI was knocking on her door. She did not need to think it over and headed for Quantico, barely 20 years old. Once there, she sprinted through the training program. After graduation, she had every option at her disposal. She had chosen Montana and never regretted it, not even a bit. The world might be

turning at lightning speed in NYC or Washington DC, but people there might be surprised at how much things had changed on the frontier too. Where big cities had riots, gang wars and drugs, here they had the alt-right movements, militias and drugs.

She started delving into the new case assigned to her. She examined the evidence from the police in Missoula and the FBI forensic evidence. The results from the lab were both confirming and surprising. The analysis confirmed that the cartridge was indeed a .50 Browning caliber which is rarely, if ever, used, particularly to shoot a single person in a scarcely populated place like Missoula. The surprising part was that the powder residue and further analysis of the cartridge pointed to a rather special type of weapon, an Iver Johnson 500. This type of gun was or is produced in very small quantities. It is rather heavy and comes with an even heavier recoil. It is also not a sniper's first choice of weapon, even for long distance shots. Someone really wanted someone dead badly, she thought.

She ran the cartridge and the Iver Johnson 500 through the FBI central data base and came up with nothing. Not a single incident where such a weapon had been used. Same answer from the FBI connection to the Interpol portal. After a while she gave up on the ammunition and started the next step in the FBI text book; looking for a similar MO. She tried for long range shooting in homicides and random killings and came up empty again. Next, she tried the engraved cartridge placed on the stone where the shot was almost certainly fired from and got lucky this time around. She hit lucky with Interpol.

There was another shooting incident in Munich, Germany. Here too, a cartridge was carefully placed in plain sight. The cartridge, although it was a different caliber, also carried an engraving. She pulled up a photo of the cartridge and zoomed in on it until she could read it... 10/10. She continued reading everything she considered important; including the type of ammo and the type of weapon from which it was fired. The cartridge was a 9mm para caliber and the weapon could have been a CZ 75 the German police report guessed. The CZ 75 was the favorite hand gun for illegal activities on the Balkans, but illegal in Germany, like most guns.

Once she finished reading everything of interest Denise decided that the next logical thing to do was to get more information from the Germans. She sent a request through the Interpol network.

Chapter 5

The Present: Day 5 - Bonn, Germany

he garage door squeaked when he opened it, as it always did. It was just a notch after 5.30am when Alexander Granger took out his trekking bike to get to work. The garages of his apartment building were outside so he could see all the flats from the backyard. It was quiet as usual and just a few lights were visible inside the apartments. One neighbor was watching TV. It must be the guy working nightshifts at a security company, Alexander thought. He put on his protective glasses and some thin gloves, put on his backpack, switched on his LED lights and started his trip to the office. The ten kilometers to the office at the other end of Bonn were part of his fitness routine. This way he got his daily dose of cardio exercise.

It was the quietest time of the day with almost no traffic; enough time to think and drink in the fresh morning air. Bonn offered a very well-developed network of bike lanes. The fact that many politicians and those working for them still travelled between Bonn and Berlin, although the German capital was moved to Berlin more than 25 years ago, ensured that plenty of public funds were available and invested in local infrastructure. Alexander did not mind if taxpayer money was still flowing plentiful to Bonn as long as these funds were invested into something useful like this

bike lane which brought him to his office from his garage in less than 25 minutes.

Alexander put his bike in one of the empty spaces, locked it up and walked the few meters to the first of many security doors he had to pass through every working day. He swiped his card and proceeded through the check point.

It was just after 6am but the elevator was already packed. Alexander stood out with his height of 190cm and strong built. His tireless exercise routine of weight training and martial arts showed even in his standard office suit. He had five black belts now, proud that he never had to use his Taekwondo skills outside a dojo. He had long ago given up wearing a tie which set him apart even further from his colleagues in the elevator.

He reached his floor and walked to his office at the end of the corridor. His desk did not look any better than last night when he left it. Where are those little miracle workers, those famous 'Heinzelmaennchen', when you needed them, he thought. Generally, the case load was heavy and sometimes he found it difficult to believe that crimes can be solved just by shifting paper or, more and more increasingly, data.

Alexander was a 'Hauptkommissar' at the Bundeskriminalamt (BKA) which would make him a Detective Lieutenant in the U.S. Ever since his mother had moved back to Germany after a failed marriage to a police officer in the United States, Alexander had wanted to be a cop himself. They left America before he was ten years old. He watched every cop show he was allowed to as a kid and learned to read through crime novels. His interest in crime solving and policing was a driving force in school for him.