

~ Checkpoint Summer ~

~ ! Inspired by: 99 Luftballons by Nena, and <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZNR6x7V9N/> ! ~

Ring-ring, ring-ring, the alarm clock on my bedside table rang. **09:00. 03/07/1984**, it said. I groaned and hit it with my palm, and for the thousandth time this year, thought about throwing it out the window. The gentle orange light shone down at me from my window. Another sunny day in West Berlin.

I quickly got ready and couldn't help but notice how pale I looked today. But I put my curls in a messy bun and called it a day. Maybe some mascara and jewelry would lift up the outfit.

"Ida Weber! You'd better be awake when I come in!" I heard Mom yell from the kitchen.

"Coming!"

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"So, you're going out today, right?" My mom asked teasingly.

"Yes, Mom. Just like every other day, ordinary stuff."

"Mhmm...I wouldn't be so sure about that, so tell me, who's going?"

"Well, me, obviously, Erika and Till, Tobias, Paul, and Lotta. The usual."

"Who are Erika and Till?"

My father called as he walked out of the bathroom in his bathrobe. Mom took out the toast from the new toaster, a bright yellow one, SO many colors to choose from, and they chose the traffic lights. Is there a worse choice?

"Really, Dad? Erika is my best friend. And Till is the punker with that band. You know them." I turned around in my chair.

"I'm teasing, I know Er and Till, but seriously now, who is Lotta?" Dad answered.

"You know, Lotta, tall, thin, gentle soul, light hair...always has this light green cashmere sweater..." My mom started explaining thoroughly.

"That's okay, Sophie, really.."

"Well, I'm just saying, Mark."

Ring-ring-ring-ring, the phone rang. I was really starting to hate the word *Ring*.

"I'll get it." My mom said as she exited the kitchen. "Yes, hello, oh, uhm, just a second." She covered the speaker with her hand. "Ida, honey, it's for you."

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"Yes?"

"IDA! Oh my god! You won't believe what happened! Listen..." Erika said on the other line.

"Yeah, hi Erika! Give me just a sec..." I said as I took my plate and phone with me into my room.

"So, you know how – you're getting a call, on another line," Erika said.

"Oh? Really, give me a second," I hung up on Erika, "yes, hello?"

"Ida! Guess where I'm calling from!" Till said happily.

"I don't know, where?"

"Till, you idiot, you could've just come to talk down here!" I heard Erika yell.

"Erika, language!" Mrs. Hoffmann shouted at Erika.

"FINE!"

"I'm calling from my bedroom!" Till boasted. "Crazy, right?"

"Your door still has to be open because dad doesn't want the cord to damage!" Erika shouted from downstairs.

"Shut up!!" Till shouted back embarrassed and angry.

"Ida, don't fall for it, he's been calling people all morning to tell them about his new phone!" Erika came upstairs.

"Get out!" Till yelled at Erika.

"No," Erika said calmly as I heard her lie down on the bed.

"Anyways..." I exhaled, "You guys coming today?" I asked them.

"Of course, what kind of question is that?" Till answered eagerly.

"Okay, great, can we meet at the big clock at 11?" I asked.

"Ugh, you know the big clock is the farthest from us," Erika complained.

"But it's the closest to the rest of us," I explained. "I'm gonna call Paul and Lotta, you call Tobias, and tell him when and where we're meeting up, okay? And also, take your swimsuits."

"Fine..." They groaned at the same time.

"ALSO, Till take your cassette tapes and tape recorder."

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I packed my bag with everything I needed; Water, a swimsuit, cassette tapes, my notebook and pen (always), and some cash. Oh, and I put on my walkman of course. And my Doc Martens.

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"Okay, mom, dad, I'm going, I'll see you later!"

"Okay, honey, have fun and stay safe!"

"We'll be fine, bye!"

I sat down on my bike, and away I went.

99 Luftballons

Auf ihrem Weg zum Horizont

Played in my ears.

The day was perfect, sunny and warm. I passed the Berlin wall and as I was looking at it, I felt this immediate feeling of hope, like it would be over soon.

I continued straight forward and stopped right before the big clock.

I saw a few familiar faces.

"Ida! You came!" Lotta said as I came down from my bike.

"Of course, let me guess, Erika and Till are not here?" I asked.

"No, but Paul spoke to them last, and Till said they'll be late," Tobias said.

"Classic Hoffmanns. Always..." Paul started.

"Always what? Iconic?" Till said as he and Erika slid next to us on their bikes.

"Of course." Erika added.

Paul nodded sarcastically.

"You got the tape recorder?" I asked.

"Pffft, of course, what'd you expect?" Till answered

"You tell me," I said as I saw Till take out a cigarette and lighter.

"Goddamn old lighter..." He murmured while trying to light up the cig.

"I got a lighter," Lotta said as she tossed a light green lighter with dragonflies and flowers.

"Damn, Lotta, I didn't know you're such a punker." Till tossed back the lighter.

"There's a lot you don't know about me," Lotta said seriously.

There was that awkward silence again.

"So, uh, I was thinking about going orange, like Bowie," Paul said to break the silence.

"You already got the cut!" Till said as he ruffled Paul's hair.

"You messed up my do!" Paul said as he looked at a window of an old train.

"No kidding," Till said.

"Let's get going," Erika suggested.

So we went. I put on my headphones and this time played *Uncertain Smile* by *The The*.

We followed Tobias because he said he knew the way to a lake called *Ziegeleisee*.

We came there and swam, tanned, did what everyone else did. The sun slowly set, and I thought about how simple life is. I don't want to grow up, I don't want change. Who knows where I'll be in 40 years, right?