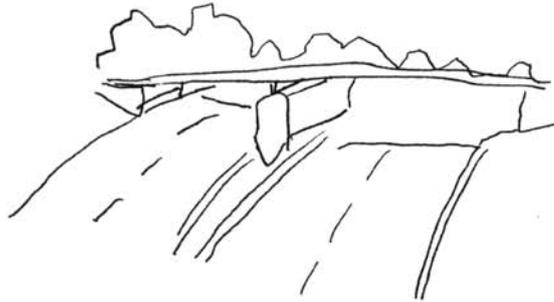


SHORT STORIES

Paul Huf

**You have to be as cool as
Alain Delon, sagte Želko**



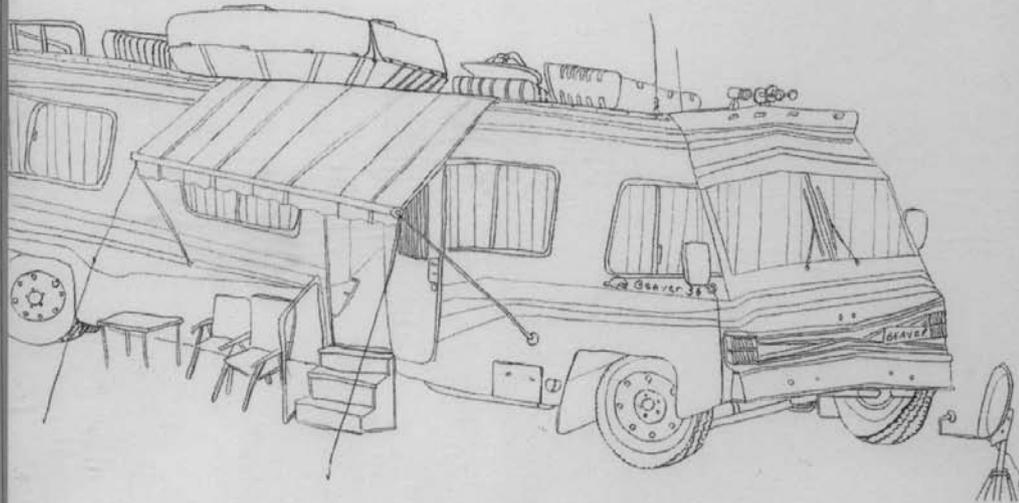
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published 2006
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Paul Huf

Vom Tod und vom Alkohol

gelesen von Martin Pfisterer, Musik von Kristof Huf



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published 2006
black ink verlag

Call-a-Pizza

Skyscrapers, apartment buildings from the fifties, a cement church steeple with a quaint clock on a hot day. There is garbage lying on the street, and a field of wheat in an open construction site. The stalks, full and heavy, move languidly in the wind. The hot asphalt shimmers.

I've been on the road since morning and now it is late afternoon. I haven't had breakfast yet, and I feel weak from hunger, the heat, and this place. Apartments next to each other, on top of each other, the density of it! Whole forests of dish antennas, rusty play grounds squeezed in between the skyscrapers, and shimmering light over the asphalt.

Call-a-Pizza, a rectangular, flat cube at the edge of the road. Neon advertising over the entrance, and bone-shaped cement paving stones in the court yard. Three chairs in the shade near the building, and an ash tray. One chair is occupied, a smoking young woman, a large cup of coffee in front of her.

"Hello."

"Hi."

Insane heat, a lot hotter than outside. The stainless steel pizza ovens are going full throttle. A young man behind the counter, a shy smile, crooked teeth, white t-shirt saying Call-a-pizza on his chest.

"One pizza Quattro Stagioni and a can of Coke, please. How long will it take?"

"About ten minutes."

"Ok, I'll be sitting in front of the house."

To the young woman in front of the house: "Pretty hot".

"Yes, I wish I could go swimming in this weather, but I have to study."

"What are you studying?"

"I'm trying to get my high school diploma at night."

An old VW Jetta pulls up. A woman gets out, blond curls, middle-forties, mini-skirt, a tired, worn-out face, cigarette dangling from mouth.

Her passenger, a gaunt man, same age, deep-set eyes, brown skin of a smoker, tattoo on his lower arm, open shirt.

"Hello."

"Hello."

Both walk into the room with the sales counter.

"Ok., here we are. Did any new orders come in?"

"No, not so far."

They come back outside. He sits down on the chair next to me. She leans against the windowsill.

Both light a cigarette..

"Damn hot. Bad for business."

"Yes, very hot. Do people eat less pizza in this heat?"

"You can say that again. Our son is taking over this store next month.

"Really? He looks pretty young."

"Yes, he just turned eighteen. He started here right after he finished school, and the other day the leaseholder offered to let him take over the store. So we all sat down together and discussed the whole thing in the family."

"We are helping him. I deliver the pizzas and help in the kitchen, and my husband takes care of the advertising."

Their son comes from the kitchen and gives me my pizza.

"Yes, and it's good to sit out here. Maybe soon we'll put a few tables and chairs here."

"Yes, and buy silverware and plates."

The telephone rings. A new order is coming in. The mother goes to the kitchen and helps her son. The father lights another cigarette.

"It would be important to have a steady clientele soon, so that we can pay off the debts for the take-over. I'll do a lot of advertising, and by providing special services I'll try and find people who want to have daily deliveries in their lunch hour.

The girl next to me lights a cigarette and underlines sentences in her text with a magic marker. I am finished, say good-bye, and wish them good luck for the future. The father says I should come back, and gives me a mini-joke book.

It's still hot as I start on my way home. Now the sun shimmers red above the asphalt. Slowly the day turns into evening.

Translation: Christine Schurtman
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