

Sherman is in the Cellar

Von Erzsebet

Kapitel 1: Sherman is in the Cellar

It was a heritage, my friend Sherman said, from his uncle. This uncle owned a night-club back on terra, which furniture was antique, even by my standards. Since Sherman was not interested in giving up his claim here in the ring, and was neither willing to sell all the furniture along with the house, he planned to start a 'Nostalgic Coffee-Shop' on RingOrsta 75 - with the approval of the company's management of course.

The heritage included a nice amount of money, the selling of the house added to this and so Sherman allowed himself to ship the bar - and the little round tables, and the quite comfortable stools, and the mighty mirror - across the sonsyst.

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I first saw the furniture while helping to unload the conts. The place Sherman had rented for his Coffee-Shop was on the better side of the orsta. More expensive, Sherman admitted, but a better clientele and a quite nice look through the portholes. Since the orsta rotates on the upper rim of the ring you always have a look on the delicate veil of molecular-sized overburden from the mines. By the light of the sun so many thousand miles away it is slightly glittering in the colours of the rainbow.

Sherman got very sentimental about the bar, told me how often he had sat there as a child, after school and before the night-club opened, doing his homework, listening to the weird stories his uncle had loved to tell, and more than once cutting the name of a beloved in the reddish wood, below the thick board of the bar in the shadow - and secretly of course. There was the name 'Marianne', he pointed out, a blonde with blue eyes, and there 'Nasrin' as dark as the aged wood. And there... and here he only had started with a 'T' for 'Theresa', because his uncle had gotten suspicious. And seeing Sherman's knife his uncle had told him how somebody had lost his hand on this very bar, seemingly in an argument, but really because this bar needed blood every now and then. Sherman laughed, his memory refreshed, and told me, that he had also laughed then. That had upset his uncle so severely that he had dropped a bottle of red wine, which had burst into shards on the trapdoor behind the bar, where the cellar had been. Sherman pointed out for me, where this trapdoor had been down on terra, what it's dimensions had been, started sketching it on the grey plastic-floor with a piece of red chalk from a drawer of the bar and added the outlines of the puddle of

wine.

"Oh, and he WAS upset about that, my uncle. Because that had been an insult to the spirits of the cellar in his eyes."

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A few days later nearly everything from the conts had found it's place and the soon to be opened Coffee-Shop looked nearly like the night-club on the photos Sherman had shown me.

Sherman was happy, he said, but he looked very tired. Surely he had worked in his mine beside fitting out his Coffee-Shop. I asked, if I could help him out, personal or moneywise, but he refused my offer. Instead he invited me to the opening the next evening. We had a chat and when I said 'good night' he asked me if I was believing in ghosts. I thought about it, but then he smiled. "Just joking", he said.

The opening was splendid, with real coffee from terra and home-made cakes and cookies from the neighbours and the company's management. But Sherman looked awful, his face grey and his hands trembling, so that he spilled a lot of the aromatic coffee. I tried to ask him what was wrong, but he did not answer. By chance I overheard a conversation, about Sherman not being in his mine for weeks, so once more I tried to find out how he got to be like that - but in vain.

The next day I came to his place before he opened. I asked him, what ghost was haunting him, but he only laughed at me. "The spirits of wine will never ever come to where only synthetic alcohol is being drunk", he said and shut the door in my face.

Several days I tried to get him, to speak with him, but he avoided me. So at last I gave up and sadly buried our friendship, which had lasted so long.

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A month or two after the opening of the Coffee-Shop I read in the company's news, that the place was vacant again. I could not believe it, went to the Coffee-Shop and found it closed. I managed to open the door with a little knife and looked at the debris of Sherman's antique furniture.

The mirror behind the bar was broken, most of the stools and tables were burned and the bar was badly damaged with an axe, which still stuck in the middle of the board. I walked across crunching shards of glass to have a look at the bar. And there I found what somebody had written on the floor behind the bar, with red chalk: "Sherman is in the cellar."

But here there has never been a cellar, not here on the orsta. Here there only was the

plastic of the floor behind the bar, several insulation layers, ice-cold steel and empty space. Empty space and a tail of molecular-sized rocks drifting with the orsta, with a carcass dancing in it - the corpse of my late friend Sherman.

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