



Rothilda von Rotortod: **OVERTURNED**

II. The landing pillars *Ten years later*

Chapter 4: Under suspicion of murder

A special on TV

Alfons Heimenross was satisfied with himself and the world. He stretched out on his television armchair with relish. He had even enjoyed a bottle of his favourite red wine – something he usually only did in hours of cosy togetherness with one of his female admirers.

This really was a news show to his taste. It was exactly the way he wanted to be presented in the media – with himself in the center of attention. Starting point: a close-up of – Alfons Heimenross! Problem report, political assessment, warning against radicals by: Alfons Heimenross! Big finish: a close-up of – Alfons Heimenross! Judgement, admonishing words, combined with a call for the preservation of social peace. Perfect!

He poured the rest of the bottle into his glass and took another big sip. Now things were back to normal! Now he had regained the power of interpretation! Not even 24 hours ago, everything had looked completely different. Exhausted from the eternal parliamentary feud, he had sunk down on the sofa and pressed the remote control. Relaxing at last, he thought, getting the mind off things, just drifting along...

And what did he see? Some overzealous busybody had actually blown up the case of the foolish old man who died under a wind farm into a special broadcast. And this at prime time, right after the main news!

Of course, he had already been asked about the story in Parliament. But there he had not attached any importance to the matter. Certain colleagues are just wont to look at even the smallest stain on the shirt of their political opponents with a magnifying glass. If he were to worry about this every time, he should have left the political stage long ago! Even the strongest heart can't stand such quibbling.

But now, after television had artificially inflated the incident, he was of course forced to deal with the matter. It was unbearable how these TV windbags approached the subject! In a discussion round, alleged experts and supposedly affected people were allowed to spread all those adventurous theories that had not been reported until then for good reason.

"... as a result of infrasound, pathological changes in the cardiac muscle tissue can occur," he heard one of these smart-aleck scientists with the greyish hair and the obligatory smart guy glasses sum up. "And our studies have shown that this can also lead to cardiac arrhythmia."

"So you think the thesis that wind turbines can damage the heart is plausible?" the moderator followed up. It was the same heavily made-up woman that had recently presented the casting show about "Energetic Art" with him. What a TV whore, Heimenross thought bitterly. These people are ready to do anything if only the ratings are high enough!

"It is certainly not possible to make such a sweeping statement," the expert made clear. "But it is obvious that wind turbines emit infrasound and that infrasound – depending on how strong it is and how long you are exposed to it – can lead to heart problems in the long run."

"Isn't that exactly the case we are discussing here?" the woman in warpaint insisted. "And isn't it therefore safe to say that we are dealing here with a victim of wind energy?"

The expert shook his head. "No, it's too early for that at this stage. We'll have to wait for the full report on the investigation. Without wishing to anticipate my colleague, I assume that the report will state a multifactorial causal chain."

"Could you explain this in more detail?" asked the anchorwoman.

"Well, someone who has a weak heart or other health problems is naturally more at risk of being damaged by infrasound. In that case, caution surely is advised."

The presenter looked briefly in the direction of the camera. Apparently, she just got a signal from the director. "Perhaps you could list a few specific precautions," she suggested.

The expert took a sip of the water that was on the table before him. "This is not so easy," he said thoughtfully. "The problem with infrasound is precisely that it is below the human threshold of perception. So we often don't even notice that

we are damaged by it. But it's certainly not a good idea to camp under a wind farm for months with a weak heart."

Enraged Heimenross switched off the television. Even though the expert put the event into perspective and played down the incident, the whole tendency of the show displeased him. The title alone was telltale in his eyes: "Health risks from wind turbines?" Didn't such a wording already suggest that wind turbines could have harmful effects on health? And wasn't such an insinuation completely irresponsible in view of the enormous importance of wind energy for society, indeed for the whole planet?

Lazerov

Heimenross reached for his smartphone and scrolled through the number directory. Fortunately he knew the editor in charge. Now he would set him straight!

"It's me, Heimenross", he barked into his mobile phone as soon as someone answered, "I'm just watching your special about the old jerk under the wind farm – how the hell did you come up with this stupid idea? At our meeting the other day we had agreed something completely different! Why didn't you at least call me up first? I would have ..."

"Excuse me," a female voice asked, "to whom am I speaking?"

Heimenross began to falter: Did he dial the wrong number?

As it turned out, his contact at the TV station was not available at that time. That's why another employee had answered the phone. She blustered about social media, flash mob, public pressure and the duty to inform people and then ended the conversation rather abruptly.

Heimenross was boiling with rage. He hadn't been dumped like that in a long time! Now only Groentraed and his company could help. After all, he had only recently signed an exclusive consulting contract with StarWind. So he could expect the managing director to stand by his side in such a situation – no matter how late it was!

He was scrolling through his contact list again when his smartphone started buzzing – he had turned it down during the parliamentary debate. Heimenross looked at the display: it was Groentraed!

The StarWind boss did not bother with long speeches. He just made sure that Heimenross had already heard about the uproar in the social media about the dead old man under the wind turbines. Then he concluded that his business partner was certainly aware that something had to be done about it. Of course, Groentraed already had an idea ...

Shortly afterwards Heimenross heard the doorbell ring. In front of him stood a wiry man who introduced himself as "Lazerov, head of Security of StarWind". In his hand he held a bulbous bag, which reminded Heimenross remotely of a medical kit.

Lazerov ... Heimenross wondered whether this was an indication of Eastern European roots. In fact, some KGB know-how might have been useful to him now. And hadn't Groentraed told him that they had recruited top people from all over the world for the security department that had been set up as part of the company's expansion?

Nevertheless, the man was rather unpleasant to him at first sight, not to say uncanny. It started with the way he shook hands. The initially limp handshake suddenly changed into a firm, almost painful grip. Involuntarily Heimenross had to think of ticks – of their habit of first crawling around on their victim's skin to find a suitable spot for their bloodthirsty bite.

In contrast to Groentraed, who always strove for a distinguished appearance, Lazerov, despite his classy designer suit, exhibited extremely uncouth behaviour. He just stormed past his business partner into the apartment, put his bag down and unsolicitedly squatted down somewhere – and that of all places in the very armchair where Heimenross himself had previously sat. There was something almost assault-like about that. Astonished, Heimenross watched the unusual behaviour, but said nothing. After all, he was dependent on the man.

At least Lazerov made an extremely energetic impression. "Okay, Alfons," he suggested, "I think it's best if we sort things out first. So what have we got?"

Heimenross tried to respond to the chummy tone. "Great idea," he said jovially, "let's start with a brainstorming session. I do that quite often as well! Would you like a drink, Laze... Excuse me: What's your first name again?"

His counterpart looked at him as if he didn't understand the question. "Laze ... Yes, Laze is alright," he said. "You can call me Laze. And I don't want a drink."

Laze ... It should rather be "Lasse", Heimenross thought. "Lasse Lazerov" sounded pretty good. He had probably misunderstood it. "Well, Lasse," he started, without the other one paying attention to the pronunciation of the name, "it's all about..."

While he was describing the events from his point of view, Lazerov took something out of his bag that looked like a dictaphone to Heimenross. Was he trying to record the conversation? But what would be the point of this? And couldn't he at least have asked for permission before doing so?

Increasingly annoyed Heimenross observed how the other fiddled around with the small device. He had difficulty concentrating on his report. Without looking into the eyes of his counterpart, he had the feeling he was talking to himself. Furthermore, he was irritated by the stubbly-haired skull that Lazerov turned

towards him while he was installing the device. Under the blond buzz cut a kind of tattoo seemed to shimmer, something that for Heimenross looked like a triangle of jagged lightning bolts. In the diffuse light of the ceiling spotlight, the flashes seemed like the quivering rim of a crater from which a volcano would hurl its lava flows in the next moment.

Heimenross felt increasingly insecure. He faltered, he got muddled up, lost the thread ... It was as if he had never had a rhetoric coach. Then why did he spend so much money on rhetoric training?

Lazerov, however, was not in the least bothered by the sentences ending in the middle of nowhere and the missing bridges between the words. Only when Heimenross took a break did he briefly look up from the strange little device and readjusted it as soon as the flow of speech started up again.

"That's all?" he asked when Heimenross finally finished his report.

Heimenross shrugged his shoulders. "You know ... I actually only caught a glimpse of the whole affair in passing – and that secondhand. In conversations with colleagues in Parliament, and then in the evening, on television, when I ..." "No matter, I think we're set now," Lazerov interrupted him. He took a tablet out of his bag and put the strange little device next to it. Then he casually touched both utensils with his hand and leaned back in his armchair.

The Information Densifier

This went too far for Heimenross! Since the security manager apparently wasn't in the mood to explain what he was doing, he got up from his seat without further ado and stood behind Lazerov. In this way, he hoped, he would be able to see with his own eyes what was actually going on here. How could he know whether this close-mouthed muscleman wasn't actually making fun of him and in reality was just playing some computer game?

What he saw, however, did not make the odd procedure any more transparent for him. Pictures and documents flitted by on the screen in rapid succession. As Heimenross suspected, they all were in some way connected with the events concerning the windmill victim: television broadcasts, police reports, statements from associations and parties, a medical bulletin, a cadastral map for the area around the wind farm ... But what was the point of letting all this simply rush by?

"What's that device next to the tablet?" Heimenross finally asked.

"An information densifier," Lazerov replied without turning his eyes from the tablet.

An explanation that didn't explain anything – Heimenross was just about to dig deeper when a list of names appeared on the screen that answered his

question by itself. Apparently, the "information densifier" had connected and analysed all the information that could be gathered through electronic research, through Heimenross's report and probably also through the introductory strategy discussion at StarWind.

The result was a list of persons who seemed particularly promising for influencing the further development of the event. They were almost exclusively members of a local anti-wind-power initiative. Two of the names lit up red. According to the analysis of the "information densifier", these persons were of central importance for the course of events.

"Margaret, called 'Maggie' Rhode and Monica Gunter", read Lazerov. "Do you know them?"

Heimenross shook his head. "No, never heard of them. Who's that?"

Instead of an answer, Lazerov clicked on the names. Thereupon several windows opened on the screen, in which the two women could be seen together. Lazerov stroked the screen with his hand. Images flickered past Heimenross's eye, which disappeared as soon as they reached his perception. In the end, Lazerov had a full-size image appear on the tablet. It showed the two women crouching under a wind turbine on a foggy day. One of the women held the other in her arms, apparently with the intention of comforting her. Next to her, a man lay motionless on the naked soil.

Heimenross understood that this was a recording of the very incident around which there had been such hype in the social media. It looked like a picture that had been taken from a great height and then artificially enlarged. But how had Lazerov got hold of the image? As far as Heimenross knew, pictures of the event didn't exist.

"Have you ever seen one of these persons?" Lazerov asked, his gaze fixed at the screen.

As Heimenross again denied, Lazerov went back to the list of names. This time he clicked on the two highlighted names one by one, whereupon all sorts of information about "Margaret 'Maggie' Rhode" or "Monica Gunter" appeared on the tablet: address, profession, workplace, bank account, creditworthiness, current call list of the mobile phone, contacts, diseases, sexual orientation, sexual partners, holidays, hobbies, political convictions ...

Lazerov clicked on the address of Monica Gunter. Immediately, a kind of street-view image of the associated living environment was visible on the screen. Monica Gunter lived in a five-story apartment block in the city, in a side street with little traffic.

"Far from perfect," grumbled Lazerov. "Let's see how the other lady lives." He clicked on the address of "Margaret Rhode". Once again a street-view image built up on the screen. "That's better," Lazerov noted.

Heimenross did not quite understand what Lazerov meant by this. What he saw was just an ordinary old house in the country. A bit out of the way, with colourful shutters and a half-wild garden, in which here and there a verdigris-covered clay figure stuck out of the weeds. He had liked the other place better. Lazerov zoomed the house closer, until one of the windows with the crocheted curtains could be seen in close-up. One more click and they suddenly stood inside the living room, at least that's how it seemed to Heimenross.

An unequal game

The head of security was again playing around with the device he called "information densifier". Somehow he managed to make it possible for them to take a virtual walk through the cottage. As if they had sent someone into the house with a camera, they could inspect the premises at their leisure. No corner, however hidden, was safe from the gaze of the secret camera.

"Ah, she has a dog," Lazerov murmured to himself, "we have to pay attention to that ... But on the whole it's exactly what we need."

He looked for the mobilphone numbers of the two women and clicked on "Monica Gunter". Heimenross saw a kind of screenshot of the smartphone display appear on the tablet. Lazerov went to "Contacts", then to "Maggie", and typed a short message: "Must see you urgently. Can't talk on the phone. It's best to come right over. Monica." A moment later the message was on its way to the woman who called herself "Maggie".

Lazerov again conjured the street-view picture of the cottage on the screen. Not five minutes later the door opened. In the light that fell outside the inhabitant of the house was clearly recognisable. Apparently Maggie had received the alleged message from Monica. She patted her dog, who obviously would have liked to accompany her, then closed the door and disappeared into the night.

For the first time Heimenross noticed the hint of a smile on Lazerov's face. Or maybe it was just a facial twitch due to tension. For it was only the corner of his left mouth that seemed to twist into a smile.

"Okay," muttered the strange visitor. "Let the game begin."

He turned to Heimenross: "One of us has to go to the pathology, the other one has to get inside that house." He pointed to the picture of the cottage on the screen. "What would you like to do?"

Heimenross frowned. He didn't understand anything. "I don't know what ..." he stuttered. "Why should we ...?"

"This is not the time for explanations," Lazerov rebuked him. With a stern face he added: "If we don't act immediately, everything you have built up with

StarWind over the past years is in danger. So what do you want: to discuss or to save the world?"

"It's all right," Heimenross gave in. He pondered briefly: "Pathology" sounded far more unpleasant than a visit to the cottage ... "I'll take the house," he decided. "And what am I to do there?"

Lazerov reached into his bag and pulled out a small, elongated object. "Okay, watch out," he instructed his comrade-in-arms. "You have to hide this box here somewhere in the house. Choose a concealed place, a place you would choose yourself if it was your own house. And don't let it fall down – this could be very unpleasant for you!"

Heimenross was highly suspicious: Was he actually asked to break into a house? But in view of the dramatic words with which Lazerov had described the situation, he only asked shyly: "And how am I supposed to get into the house?"

Lazerov opened the Street View program again and started a virtual tour around the house. In front of a garden door he stopped the camera movement and pointed with his head to the picture: "Here you are – the lady maintains a very open relationship to her environment."

When Lazerov enlarged the picture, Heimenross too realised that the door was only ajar. Everyone actually came in here. "Understood", he nodded. While the StarWind employee packed his things, he asked casually: "And what are you going to do in the pathology department?"

Lazerov's left corner of his mouth twitched again. "Better not ask ..." He got up, packed up his things and put his bag under his arm. "Besides," he added, halfway to the door, "take some sausage for the dog. And remember, your time is limited. It's best to leave immediately."

Heimenross felt like a recruit on the first day of his training. "But how can we find a way to coordinate with each other?" he wanted to know. "I think we should keep each other informed of our actions. Give me your mobile number at least, so ..."

"Failure forbidden," Lazerov cut him off. "If you have any questions, call Groentraed. But if you do everything as discussed, it won't be necessary. Just turn on the news tomorrow."

Sensational developments

Heimenross could still remember the queasy feeling that spread in him when Lazerov had left. For a few seconds he had just stood there and stared at the door that had fallen into the lock. He had even wondered whether the whole thing might not have been a dream after all.

But then his gaze had fallen on the small oblong box, which was still lying on the table in a very real way. Carefully, as if it were an alien reptile, he had taken it in his hand. This strange rattling ... Should he check, he had asked himself, what was in the box? No, better not look too closely! Lazerov was absolutely right on this point. The more he knew about the whole thing, the more the action became his own; the more he turned from a willing accomplice into a partner in crime.

So the next morning he had followed Lazerov's advice and simply waited. However, the whole time – no matter what kind of meeting he was in – he kept one eye on the news app of his smartphone. Finally, in the early afternoon, the time had come. A news alert announced: "Sensational development in the case of the windmill death!"

Luckily Heimenross was at that time only discussing the appointments for the coming week with his office manager. So he was able to retire to his office without any problems and click through the news portals at his leisure. On the radio, which he had also switched on for safety's sake, the report was even the top news item: "In the case of the man who allegedly died of infrasound and was found yesterday under a wind turbine, a surprising turn of events has occurred. A second, more detailed autopsy revealed that the man apparently had a high dose of arsenic in his blood. According to the police, a violent crime cannot be ruled out at this stage".

Shortly afterwards Heimenross had received a call from the TV editor who had been unavailable to him the previous evening. "Have you already heard about the new developments?" he asked. "We are planning a special feature about it tonight. Would you be available for an interview?"

From then on things developed a momentum of their own, which was entirely to Heimenross's taste. Submissive requests for statements, embarrassed backpedaling of the scandalous journalists who only yesterday were talking about the end of the world by infrasound, full rehabilitation of wind power.

An insidious plan

Heimenross took another sip of wine and clicked again on the feature with his interview. He just couldn't get enough of it. The way he stood in front of the camera in such a statesmanlike manner and calmly made the point clear ... Without wanting to praise himself, this was a real masterpiece!

The newscaster began the report with a serious face: "In the case of the so-called 'windmill death', events have been tumbling since noon today. After a lethal dose of poison was first detected in the body of the deceased, the police received an anonymous tip about a suspect."

He turned his head to the side, where a second image window opened at the same moment. It showed Heimenross in close-up in front of the parliament building. "We are now joined by Energy Minister Heimenross", the news anchor introduced the interview. "Mr. Secretary, what is your assessment of recent developments?"

"First of all," explained Heimenross, carefully weighing his words, "let me express my condolences to the relatives of the deceased. Their husband, father, brother has, so to speak, become a double victim, in so far as his death has been used in a horrible way for terror propaganda. For this is something we can no longer turn a blind eye to: that the future of our planet is endangered by terrorist activities."

"Terrorism is a hard word," the interviewer pointed out. "Shouldn't we be more careful in the use of this term?"

Heimenross looked resolutely into the camera. "I don't like using that term either, believe me. But how else should we call it, when opponents of wind power kill one of their own in an insidious way to create the impression of a health hazard from wind turbines?"

"Perhaps we should first of all get an update on the latest developments," suggested the interviewer.

This was the sign for the director to play a film from the scene of the event. In the background an old cottage was to be seen, which Heimenross knew only too well. From off screen, a voice explained: "In this house this afternoon, the police confiscated the poison suspected to have caused the victim's death. The main suspect is the owner of the house, 42-year-old Margaret R. Our reporter spoke to the head of the operation."

The camera zoomed in on two men, one of whom was wearing a police uniform. When asked whether the poison had been found with the help of sniffer dogs, he replied: "If needed, we could of course have requested sniffer dogs. In this case, however, this was not necessary because the alleged perpetrator chose a very obvious hiding place. The house has a storage cellar that can be reached through a floor hatch. Of course we searched for the poison there first."

Heimenross still had to grin when he heard the words on his fourth viewing of the report. He couldn't have chosen the hiding place any better! To the police it was "obvious", but at the same time the place was completely unsuspicious to the so-called "Maggie", the house owner. Even if she had descended into the storage cellar in the meantime, she would not have noticed the inconspicuous box behind the thick preserving jars.

While the two men continued their conversation a little longer, Heimenross noticed something that he had missed before. At the left edge of the picture, in the background: Wasn't that ...? Yes, indeed, it was the little dog he had to

bribe with the sausage. That also had worked very well – although the dog had come barking to him when he opened the garden door. But at the same time he had wagged, so he was not necessarily hostile. In fact it was quite easy to bribe him with the sausage. As soon as he had received it, he trotted along behind Heimenross in a friendly manner, convinced that such a generous sausage donor could not be a bad person.

After the reporter had finished his conversation with the police officer, the window with Heimenross in front of the parliament building appeared again on the screen. The interviewer turned to him and asked for a final assessment: "So what conclusions can be drawn from these tragic events?"

Heimenross put on his doer's face, which was intended to emanate both concern and appeasement: "Well, I think that the intelligence services must keep an eye on the relevant groups. It is unacceptable for us to stand by and watch the inhuman activities of violent extremists. At the same time, however, I would like to emphasise here and now that politicians always have an open ear for the concerns and needs of citizens. Those who express their reservations in a democratic manner will also be heard in the future!"

Heimenross switched off the screen and reached for his red wine glass. He let the last drops of wine glide over his tongue. Should he perhaps allow himself a second bottle? No, better not, tomorrow another exhausting day was waiting for him, he couldn't afford to be hung over.

He stretched out on the couch and closed his eyes with satisfaction. Lazerov had kept his word: Everything has been put right in less than one day. Detailed planning, meticulous execution, discreet control of results – the head of a security department simply couldn't act any better.

Heimenross slipped over into a dream in which he lay on a beach, his body wrapped in the tingling pincushion of warm sand, his eyes fixed on wind turbines whose wings were adorned by the sun with a sky full of stars. When he closed his eyes even in the dream, the windmills turned into tall Hawaiian women who fanned air at him with arms as long as palm trees.

Image: Franz von Stuck (1863-1928): Luzifer (1890)

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