

Herb Neufeld and the case of **Claudine's Red Book**

by

Ulla Thomsen

Narr:

5 am and a frosty morning in Old Heidelberg. Well its Old, for sure, and Heidelberg as well, so I guess you can put those two together, but the general feeling of hte expression falls far short of what I see of it. To be sure Heidelberg is beautiful. The silk waters of hte Neckar flowing fast but smoothly beneath the red stone of the Old Bridge (and it really is old) and the green mass of the hills crowning in upon the town from three sides. This is where our little tale starts too.....

Perhaps I should explain: Herb Neufeld was sitting, as seems to be his wont, high in the loft of a house that would've got up and said hullo to any old can of paint. Actually, it had probably been calling in loud and unquotable clouds of rude words for some time for glass, in the little window where yours truly crouched and froze..... but let me not disturb your slumbers dear listener (notice the change of audience!) Where was I. Ah yes. So there I was, frozen to hte skin, my camera release button finger bright blue and the end of my nose luminous red: I'd been waiting for some time for the....ehm... objects of my somewhat questionable interest ot do something illegal (insofar as it could be construed) for some time, hours actually, so's I could leave my artistic little garret and go home to a REAL garret, when.....

FX Breaking wood an glass:

Voice: (Himmel)

Ah! Got you you peepin tom...I'll..

Herb

What! No...Just a minute..I'm...

Voice:(Himmel)

Straight to the station...! Give me that camera...
oh, the audcity...I'll...

Herb

no, let me explain...I'm..

Voice:(Himmel)

people like you're revolting....sick...

FX Police Siren

Fades to:

Franz

Who is this.....sergeant.... who is this sleeping in the chair by my desk....

SergeantÜj□□□□□ÜEBrought in early this morning Sir... peeping tom sir....

Franz

Oh , no... brought down to this already.. a criminal police
detective lowered to dabbling with mad peeping toms at dawn!

Herb
(snore)

Franz
I know you don't care a fig about the law, my good man, but....
raise your head....don't snore like that.....

Herb
(snores)

Franz
look wake up, how can I book you?...identify yourself man....

Herb
wha...

Franz(dawning)
Herb.?

Herb
What time is it..?

Franz
Oh, My God..my God!

Herb
eh?

Franz
Herb?

Herb
eh?

Franz
wake up you oaf!

Herb
Oh, Franz... look, let them release me, will you.....

Franz
Sergeant! Sergeant! You've arrested Heidelburgs only alcoholic
detective!

Herb
now watch your words, Franz...

SergeantÜj□□□□□ÜEdone what sir?

Franz
Oh my head....Oh, the paperwork!

Sergeant
Only arrest last night Sir...

Franz(depressed)
where're my headache pills...

Herb

How many times do I hve to tell you drugs destroy the system.....

Franz

and YOU.. keep quiet... you're still under arrest, do you hear?
I haven't released you yet, you maniac....and the blasted
paperwork I'll have to go through....

Herb

how about I go down to the Pharmacy on the Hauptstrasse and get
you some aspirinm Franz?

Franz (brightening)

yes.. that's a terrific idea.....

Herb

well then, undo the cuffs...

Franz

Sergeant!

Sergeant

yes sir!

Franz

where's the damn key!

Sergeant

constable Himmel had them sir.....

Franz

well, where is he man..

Sergeant

no idea sir....I'll.

Franz (groans)

Oh my God...

Sergeant (clink)

try these sir, they're supposed...

Üj□□□□□ÜEFranz

yes, I know, I know (starts to try keys)

FZ: sound of sawing:

Franzm (paranoid)

blasted fool, gone home has he, not at home...

Herb (bright)

just think, if policemen didn't visit their girl@friends after
duty you wouldn't have this oppourtunlty to try out your handcuffs
against real hacksaws!

Franz

shut up!

Herb

how's your head?

Franz (groans)
Shut up again or I'll slip!... Blast! another blade....

Sergeant
when the shops open in the Haupstrasse I'll nip out and get
another packet of blades sir!

Franz
the most modern force in Europe, and we grind to a halt because
there are no hand saw blades...blast!...

Herb
I'm trying to work out how to eat breakfast with one hand
fastened to my chair...

Franz
for God's sake sergeant, give him something to eat...oh! and a
cup of coffee for me too....or he'll accuse us in the papers of
maltreatment..

Herb
damages?

Franz
say that again and I'll cut your arms off!

FX Phone ringing:

Herb
dam...

FX

Sergeant
urgent call sir...Üj□□□□□□ÜË
Franz
put it through....

Herb
...ages...

Franz
I'll see to you later..

Sergeant
cream sir?

Herb
no, heavy duty bolt cutters!

Franz
yes..yess...

Herb
oh, and a sandwich...

Franz (groans)
Oh...no...no, I mean yes sir....Oh no...my head.. no...I mean
yes...no.yes sir..Oh no NO NO.. yes sir...

Herb (to sergeant)

is he often like that?

Sergeant
no sir

Franz (shouts)
YES sir...

Franz (slams phone down)
SHUT UP! take that sandwich out of your mouth Neufeld!....

Herb
What?

Franz
I should arrest you !

Herb
What?

Franz
you're drooling, Neufeld!

Herb
eh?

FranzÜj□□□□□□ÜESergeant!

Sergeant
yessir

Franz
watch this man cloely!

Sergeant
is he under arrest again sir!

Franz
throw away all those forms and change the charge for the time
being...conspiracy.. no, withholding evidence.. no.. willing..

Herb
can I finish my sandwich now..

Franz (disgusted)
you private Dicks are so UNCOUTH..

Herb
Franz, I', probably the only one you know...

Franz
don't change the subject!

Herb
perhaps we can talk a little, the cost..

Franz
you..are implicated..

Herb

of handcuffs is rocketing due to....

Franz
in a case..

Herb
massive increases in lot keys..

Franz
of MURDER

Herb
I what?

Franz
Sergeant, bring me those papers...

Sergeant
her sir..Üj□□□□□□Ü€
Franz
yes.. you were apprehended it says here at 0500 Hrs

Herb
5 am

Franz
0500..where were you...

Herb
huh! you know..Monchgasse 47, overlooking Steingasse 58, the rear
bedroom...

Franz
marital.?

Herb
Discord!

Franz
a well worn path..

Herb
at 250 Marks a day who gives a damn!

Franz
you're overpaid!..

Herb
thank you and goodnight!

Franz
explain..

Herb
You can see, simply enough..I was waiting up there with my
antique Exacta and a zoom lens..

Franz
revolting!

Herb

they hadn't done anything, just sat talking and smoking...

Franz
ha!

Herb
I wanted just one snap and then to home, perchance to dream as
someone once said..

Franz
yes..Üj□□□□□□Ü€
Herb
when..

Franz
yes..yes..

Herb
I squeezed the release..

Framnz
they were at it, were they!

Herb
It seemed promising, that was all!

Franz
then..

Herb
that Idiot grabbed me and threw me into a paddy wagon and sat on
my head..

Franz
Oh, no, Oh, no..

Herb
and I went to sleep..I was that tired!

Franz
I hope you were comfortable..

Herb
why

Franz
they are both dead!

Herb
what?

Franz
Double murder, both killed by the same high velocity bullet that
went through both their heads...fired from close range says
ballistics.. straight through the wall of number 59 and into the
Hi@Fi in number 60.

Herb
I don't believe it.

Franz

I don't believe it either.. anyway..you've got yourself all screwed up in htis one, haven't you. So if you undertake to help me, I'll let you go.Üj□□□□□□Ü

Herb
coming from such a good friend....

Franz
a very good and trusting friend...

Herb
OK an ex@friend!... that's really rich.

Franz
and the people at number 60 had a nasty surprise when they turned on their easy listening!

Herb
lets get this straightened out, shall we...

Franz
OK, this is hte information as I know it: those two were shot, by a NATO 7.65mm plastic jacketed bullet: the precise time is not known, but it must have ocurred between the time at which that idiot Himmel arrested you, and the time number 60 turned on the morning music at 6 O'Clock, and set the house on fire. Herb gives a new meaning to set the....

Franz
..joint on fire? OK.. and that's all I know for now, I'll let you go now, and we'll get on to the case as soon as I've got more info.

Herb
do I take the chair?

Franz
bloody chair...blasted furniture.. where is that damn Himmel..?

Sergeant
another cup of coffee ot steady the nerves sir?

Franz
Sergeant, stay over your side of the room and..and..remain silent..

Fade on sound of filing:

Narr:
When you read a novel they always say: 'I've left, my head in a whirl...the question that remained unanswered rattled round my brain..the driving rain washed into my fuddled senses a brooding sense of awareness that SOMETHING was wrong, in the back of my mind a voice worried my nerves warning me that..' FX Brakes: and that dear listener is what usually h appens to me as I cross my first side road at 9 o'clock on a bright morning: but I never think what they always write. In fact that morning my brain wasÜj□□□□□□Ü entirely empty, craving only a stiff brandy and a couple of coughs to clear the outmoded brainbox that operates from under this unholy thatch..! Apart from coughs etcetera, of course, there was something about this case that bothered me.. mainly that I was starving and that police sandwiches should be

immediately followed by a quick JAEGERMEISTER to nullify the startled gastric wreckage. The ultimate weapon really, police sandwiches..

FX back at office:

Fiorella

Hullo, Herb. Gosh, you're early, clutching your camera too.. got any nice snaps?

Herb

wait till I tell you, Fiorella.. nothing on the film and now I'm on one of Franz Habicht's cases, because the object of my interest was...(groan).. wiped out almost simultaneously as I left the scene of the crime escorted by one of Habicht's gorillas...

Fior

you haven't

Herb

make me a cup of coffee and hold my shaking hand Fiorella...

Fior

I knew 9.15 was much too early for a normal day...

Herb

..oh, and if the bank phones tell them to phone that idiot Franz Habicht..OK

Fior

agreed, O Prophet of doom..

FX coffee cups: fade in to:

Herb

so this is the scenario, poor Fiorella, and you have my complete permission to tear hair out at each ghastly episode:...

Fior

first, as you know, that Mr Schmidt phones me last thursday and comes to the office. Apparently his young bride is bidding to be an ex@bride and is having long nocturnal conversations with an unidentified visitor, namely student Japer Barlow of St Louis Missouri US of A.

Fior

Right

Üj□□□□□□ÜFX phone rings:

Herb

yup

Franz

any developments...Neufeld?

Herb

is this official, Franz?

Franz

Of course it is,Neufeld, of course it is, do you think I'd be awake haing spent hte whole night in a government camteem destroying my guts with police hamburgers when.....

Herb
sorry Franz...and

Franz
and what?

Herb
I've got a government pain in my guts too...and absolutley nothing has happened in the last 15 minutes...I swear..

Franz
you're slowing up, Neufeld I';;i...

FX slams phone down:

Fior
you were saying..

Herb
Ah yes..then he gives me a photo of said lady. Very nice, pity I'm a private dick..

Fior
ergh.

Herb
..and I follow said lady...

Fior
so far about 500 marks

Herb
check!...and sit myself in empty steeple of Monchgasse 47, watching back room of flat at Steingasse 58.

Fior
so far it's all straight forward football..
Üj□□□□□ÜEHerb
you mean cricket..

Fior
no, football has even more bends in it!

Herb
I'll go into that later, partner..anyway.. then apparently the pair are killed..with a NATO round fired with something like a Colt M16, killing them both simultaneously!

Fior
cripes!

Herb
so..I ask myself..,

Fior
yes

Herb
lets go out and have a drink.

Fior
you got it Batman!

FX coffee house later:

Herb
another beer please

Fior
thank you

Herb
oh, and another of those

Waitress
you're the one that normally takes 10 portions of milk with your
coffee, aren't you?

Herb
only when I've lost my sense of taste!

Fior
and while we're on the subject...

Herb
murder..

Waitress
murder?

Herb Üj□□□□□ÜÜheh, heh

Fior
shoot, Oh Hero!

Herb
so what we're left with is: Mr Client Schmidt, NATO gun,
interesting time to shoot two people, one of whom is American (
must look into that), and...

Waitress
sugar?

Fior
no thank you, its his waistline I'm worried about...

Herb
..and.. stop ruining my train of thought Fiorella..

Fior
what I'm worried about is..

Herb
yes..

Fiorella
Massimo

Herb
Massimo?

Fior
Massimo has trouble with his waistline too, you know..

Herb
too much pasta..you feed him all the wrong things..

Waitress
poor Massimo

Fior
yes, he is rather sweet..

Herb
particularly in that jumper you knitted him with one sleeve that
is like the leg of a trouser!

Fior
don't knock my knitting. He always wears it when he smokes his
sherlock Holmes Pipe..

Waitress
I bet he looks sweet
Üj□□□□□ÜFior
He does, too

Herb
Poor Mozzarella

Fior
Massimo

Herb
I'm thinking about the dropped stitches..

Fior
Look, I repaired them..well..sort of..

Herb
sort of being the operative word..

Fior
don't knock me, Hrebert Neufeld..

Waitress
just think, I could knit you one..

Herb
could you..

Waitress
I'll do almost anything for 100 marks..

Hreb
listen, go away, I might think you look nice in that dress but
I've got real work to do !..

Waitress
that'll be 200 to you Hrebert..

Herb
friends are all you need, aren't they!

Narr:

Having made a complete false start I was once more fluying like a stone. I walked to the old bide and watche h silken waters of the Neckar slide underneath with almost reptilian elegance. Up on the hill the ignger sandstone of the huge castle glinted in the bronze light. The hills were bright with new grwoth, and the charming and characteristic Victorian houses ob the steep slopes of the hills looked more charming and victorian than you can really imagine. I sat on the stone of the bridge and pondered. A crowd of students passed by nad the girls tittered at me (or else at each other). I sat and pondered upon the meaning of existence. How it could be lost so easily, how tenuous was the link between existence and nirvana...how a well known AmericanÜj□□□□□Ü Hamburger chain had just opened up on the Hauptstrasse almost next door to my favourite Club, Shephreds Lounge, nad how te price of a litre of lager was greater than that of a good Gimmeldinger Meerspinne Auslese 1983. All these things then jangled together and made my thatch stand on what ends it retained after all this time.

FX Phone in B/G
Then I went home and got some sleep.....

Herb
ehm

Franz
anything broken yet

Herb
only my nerve

Franz
Neufeld..you...

FX Phone clicks off:

FX Herb enters office:

Fiorell
hi, Herb, only one call, from Franz Habicht.l

Herb
I'm not surprised!

Fior
don't talk about your friends like that!

Herb
Habicht a friend..he probably assignated them!

Fior
that's a thought! I mean, what was he doing....

Herb
stuffing his face in the canteen as far as I know..

Fior
our last chance for fame dissappeared without trace.

Herb
what were YOU DOING Fiorella....THAT FATEFUL MORNING

Fior
ah, I'm not saying...ask Massimo..

HrebÜj□□□□□ÜWell, only another 300,000 suspects to go now....

Fior
apart from all the NATO forces in Germany

Herb
right.....straight on to a white hot tip....

FX DIALLING

Mr Schmidt...yes.. Herbert Neufeld...I'd like to talk to you
about..yes...I'm sorry..

fade to:

Schmidt
lousy bitch.. not at all surprised...but such a surprise.....

Herb
excuse me, Mr Schmidt, but you don't seem all that surprised....

Schmidt
Claudine was a bloodsucker...I should've know..after a month I
knew what was in her tiny brain.....

Herb
yes, by the way you never told me WHEN you were married....

Schmidt
April 15 last....april Idiots day....

Herb
where?

Schmidt
Berlin

Herb
how long had you known her?

Schmidt
14 Days!.....I should've known that all.....

Herb
yes, but how did you get to know her then....

Schmidt
Fool that I was ..through those newspaper ads that sya 'lonely
bond, 26, wishes to meet person of professional
standing,,,Etc...'

Herb

yes

Üj□□□□□ÜŒSchmidt

I should have gone for the ads that read ' leather mistress available for hire'...it would have been far less of a problem....Oh, and a lot cheaper.....

Herb

a problem?

Schmidt

pain in the arse...then....she was constantly wanting htis coat and that thing. I even changed the colour of my car because she called it 'Wehrmacht Brown'..

Herb

these things happen, you can't call them that much of a problem..

Schmidt

yes, but she constantly got in the way of my business, constantly flirting with my clients wanting a drink just as a discussion became fruitful, and generally wanting to get her oar in at any point....

Herb

did she have any business of her own...

Schmidt

That was a problem..she had nothing to do all day...she wanted to play the perfect housewife, but was too darn lazy to clean the kitchen or sweep the floor.....

Herb

hmm

Schmidt

and she was constantly walking around loosely cald when she was supposed to be formal...

Herb

uh huh

Schmidt

mind you, I suppose it could be the difference in our ages...I'm 54, after all..

Herb

you were married before?

Schmidt

I'd rather not be asked about that, after all, you're still working for me!

Herb

sorry. Is there anythign else that's relevant, do you think?Üj□□□□□ÜŒ

Schmidtd

well, you know I'm not implicated so perhaps I'd better tell you....

Herb

coincidentally...

Schmidt

yes, she insisted I insured myself, and to add her was only matter of a few marks a month..

Herb

and what was the amount

Schmidt

2000 000 marks

Herb

..phew..

Schmidt

and I want to prevent any....slowness on the part of the company..

Herb

naturally

Schmidt

so, I'm willing to pay you 5%

Herb

let me think about that, Mr Schmidt..

FX Herbs Office, He enters:

Phone rings:

Herb

yup

Franz

any..

Herb

developments?

Üj□□□□□□ÜEFranz

of course, Neufeld

Herb

straighten something out for me, Franz

Franz

what?

Herb

look into my Mr Schmidt's past for me, will you.

Franz

what for..I'm...

Herb

his first marriage

franz

ah.....(clicks off)

FX telephone ends.

Herb
Fiorella, love, have we got anything on Government agencies...

Fior
they're more than likely to have something on us, I wouldn't be surprised!

Herb
Arms Agencies, you know, FN, Walther, Oerlikon..

Fior
there's something in the red book up there....

Herb
thanks

Fior
something on Schmidt

Herb
checking, I'd better keep my nose clean with old fascist Habicht the Terrible....

fior
I wouldn't worry, he'll probably die of paranoid delusions next tuesday.....

Herb
s.....T.....U.....V.....

FiorÜj□□□□□Ü you should have to have a collar and a tatoo on your ear to be a maniac like Franz Habicht

Herb
ehm...

Fior
as I was saying to Massimo last night...

Herb
that's it.....56 78 42

FX Dialling

shush Fiorella

Fiorella
that's the trouble with you, your attitudes are purely egotistical....

Herb
ah, hello....Ministry of Defence...could I speak to someone who has responsibility for purchasing small arms through a Heidelberg Dealer named Schmidt...yes...Franz Habicht, Criminal Police Office Heidelberg: I'm at a different number...85 58 04..... yes.... 231..... thank you.....

Fiorella
tea dear?

Herb
yeah..

Fior
I'm just a coffee woman...that's the problem...

Herb
tea lady

Fior
...Massimo treats me like na assistant sometimes....

Herb
Habicht..yes...yes...

Fior
the thing is...I...

Herb
Shush...