

**CHLOE
ZEEGEN
I LOVE
MYSELF OK?**



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A Berlin Trilogy
a mikrotext

Editor: Nikola Richter
ePub production/cover design: Andrea Nienhaus
Cover image: m. gade/pixelio.de
Cover font: PLT Attention, Viktor Nübel
Pictures: Chloe Zeegen

www.mikrotext.de – info@mikrotext.de

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Chloe Zeegen

I love myself ok?

A Berlin Trilogy

Bierpinsel and Fuck Trauma



It's called the Bierpinsel and I didn't know it was in Steglitz until I moved there but I would have moved here if I'd known it was here so it's a good job I moved there. Isn't it? Isn't it. Say it so I can hear you. I can see it from my flat and I can see it when I walk down the street and I can see it when I come in from the snow. Did you hear the one about the man who went into the field and it was snowing and there was all that stuff about stolen money?

Some people preferred it before it was repainted but I like it now that it's all dolled up. When I'm far away from it, I can see it's frightening but when I'm close to it, it charms me into accepting something.

Who's the worst person to tell you're a lesbian? Your mother? No. Your father? No. Your dead mother? No.

Your dead father? No. I give up. Your waxer. You crack me up, babe. Not enough, though.

It was built in the seventies as a nightclub and restaurant – how fucking cool is that. I think I read online somewhere something about a room that was entirely gold. You ever heard about the Just World Fallacy? I reckon Kanye West falls for it. Sometimes.

It's empty now and the worst thing about it is when I look at it at night and there aren't any lights on.

Anyway, I met this guy the first week I moved here. He was having a party at his flat. He was super fucking bright and I knew he liked me when he held my gaze too long and I knew he liked me anyway cos I liked me that night and I was on fucking fire that night and you would have liked me that fucking night. We were introduced by a critic. Not my boss, another one. She's not speaking to me anymore cos I grabbed her and said into her ear "I'm living it all over again".

Right before the second time I met up with him I realised we were gonna sleep together, even though I knew I was probably gay. It's like I was clinging on to the idea of being bi cos bi is so much hotter, whereas with gay you gotta deal with the idea of getting shit your whole life and if you have kids then your kids might get shit, too.

I was in Hamburger Bahnhof the other day. They're such dicks in there. It's like they wanna humiliate you. And the guards talk to you like you're a piece of shit and there're signs everywhere saying don't do this don't do

that and outside there's a sculpture that looks like a destroyed Smurf cos they wanna tell you that's your culture and last time I was there which was in fact the only time I was there you had to put these things over your shoes and I was like fuck this I have no problem with humiliation in art if it's done right like Alex Katz but I've got a problem with their bullshit and next time I'm there if they talk to me like that again I'm gonna get on my knees and tell them I've been a bad girl and I want them to fucking give it to me cos that's blatantly the dynamic they're playing so they might as well be honest about it cos nothing is more degrading than a lie except maybe being pissed on by a guard in Hamburger Bahnhof in front of an Alex Katz whilst wearing a Smurf costume. Hmm, whatever.

Yeah, totally, he wanted to see it cos I'd been raving about it. It was like 2 in the morning and the taxi dropped us off outside. It's nice getting into a taxi and saying "Beer Brush, please!" He totally loved it and he said stop talking before I really start liking you which, when I say it, sounds like a super cheesy line but when he said it I liked it and I believed him and I knew it was too late and anyway I was busy psyching myself up cos I knew we were gonna sleep together and I've never enjoyed sex with men and loads of lesbians say it was like that for them too and you think if only I could train myself to like this and then you look back and it's like fuck that was crazy why did I torture myself like that?

We walked up the stairs on the outside looking up

the whole time cos the colours of the building look so good at night. And the building's bigger on the top than at the bottom and there it is – that threat again – but it's ok cos you're close to it and it's not threat, it's knowledge.

We couldn't get very far without reaching a locked gate. He said let's climb it but I'm no good with that shit and I was wearing heels which is so un-Berlin. I would have loved wandering around the inside of that building, especially if there really was a room entirely of gold. One with a deep, plush orange carpet. It's got windows that jut out and I can imagine myself kneeling on a white leather bench, resting my palms against the glass, looking down on the street below and thinking I've never felt better. And you would be in the corner, imagining us getting married. I would have danced with your little girl cos I think I could have loved her like my own and she came with the package and it would have been the three of us, you know? And the first time I met you in Candy I remember the feeling of feeling myself smile and I knew I could trust you cos there was something so warm and open about your face. Although, I don't think Amanda Knox was guilty, so I don't know.

He said is there somewhere we can buy a bottle? Actually, I think I said that. Yeah, it was probably me. We walked to my local Späti, so it must have been before 2 cos they were still open. I guess I gotta quit stalling. So my flat's totally fucked and needs shitloads of work. When I was in the bathroom I could hear him fucking around in the kitchen and I thought great, if I can hear

him, then he can totally hear me and I'm like on the fucking toilet lol.

Later he was like I was looking for a bottle opener I was like dude I told you to pick a screw top I didn't own a bottle opener at that stage cos being a starving artist was still a novelty and I was on some trip like I'm not gonna spend money on anything unless I absolutely *need* it, which was total bullshit. A friend stayed here recently and really liked my pared down thing until the spaghetti she'd cooked slopped straight out the pan into the sink cos I didn't have a colander.

My bedroom is the biggest room in my flat and cos I'd just moved in and was doing loads of work to it all my furniture was in there. I can't remember what order actually I can his hands were on me I think I think we were kissing he was talking I was babbling I remember thinking this is weird but he knew what he was doing you could tell he was experienced even though he was younger I remember I was up against a pillar and then on my desk and then on the floor and I was like just do it just do it and I nearly said I don't even fucking like you which isn't true. He was aggressive and had me by the neck and to be honest with you I had no problem with that in fact I liked it but we both knew there was something wrong and we couldn't go through with it. And I was like let's face it I'm gay. And he was like you're not gay but by that stage I don't think either of us knew what the fuck was going on. And then we tried again, though actually I think this bit happened before I was

like let's face it I'm gay and he was like you're not gay and I'm getting my order mixed up. We tried kissing each other more softly but that wasn't happening either and he turned me towards the wall and was touching me and that was ok cos it was easier to disengage in that position but by this point I knew it had to stop.

We chatted loads that night cos we always got on so well. I liked the way he referred to Lost Highway as clumsy, even though I love David Lynch. I told him Inland Empire has no chapters, even though it's three hours long, and he liked that. When he likes stuff he says "Nice". I remember knowing that waking up would be humiliating. Bleugh.

The next morning, I walked him to the S-Bahn and we talked about the night before. He was acting like it was cool but I knew he found the experience grim, too. There was a funny look in his eyes, like he was processing a new impression of me. And I felt shit cos I'd exposed some pretty weak interpretation that was lame as fuck. We passed a shop sign that included a play on words and he made a sarcastic remark that still makes me laugh whenever I think about it. Ha ha. A while ago we were in a crap bar in Mitte and we ordered some chips, which they served to us by chucking the bag on the table. He said "A bowl would be nice" in the same sarcastic tone and that, too, makes me laugh whenever I think about it :).

He said some super bright stuff about the Bierpinsel and we're still in touch. I came out on Facebook. You

gotta own that shit. I thought about having a Degrassi Junior High moment and scaling that gate all on my own in the middle of the night. Yeah to you that's like Beverly Hills 90210. Kinda. Oh...

Shit and Corruption



Hey, so when I was three my playschool had a nativity play and I was picked to be the angel I was freaking out like crying cos I didn't want it you had to put this long white dress on I hated the thought of my head going through it all the mums were like wtf why are you freaking out all the other girls wish they could be angels and you're gonna look so pretty but that shit just made me cry harder and all the other girls were like crying cos they wished they could be angels and it was like wah! little girl mutiny in a church hall in Pinner. When my mum picked me up she was like why don't you wanna be the angel I can't remember what I said something about the dress and I can't remember what she said something about the dress but she wasn't like wtf.

My mum had a pretty fucked childhood she was born in 1946 in Berlin to a seamstress single mother go figure what that was like. Her father was a Soviet doctor she never knew him cos her mother just hung out with him after the war for protection and politics, you know? I dunno how they met mate it's not important my mother was always like what's the point? when people asked if she'd ever track him down.

My mum was a tough little street kid you had to ask her permission to play on her turf she saw some pretty hardcore shit people were like killing themselves left right and centre once my mum and her sister were walking down the street in Neukölln cos that's where they were from and the adults were like get back! get back! so of course they didn't cos duh child psychology but I guess the adults were freaking out as it was dragged out of the water and I didn't know this but Berlin has more bridges than Venice and the face was still there and the face was round and revealed something something close to despair and the sound brought the adults something close to despair and please no-one say it but it's right fucking there and shit someone say what to do what to do when you've taken a thread and woven it through.

I was in Kreuzberg yesterday at the Straßenfest it was cool and it was raw I was with a girl she was cute and would send me texts full of smileys just like I like it. We go into a cafe and it's full of barrels of nuts and olives and smells good. Some guy has a big bowl of white things and I'm like what are they and he's like have some

and I'm like I dunno they look weird and he's like eat some and I look closely and they're like the spent shells of seeds and the seeds have been eaten and the bowl is full of the shit you can't eat and he looks at me with no expression and is like eat them. We turn round and the girl is like he's taking the piss and I look down and we're walking on loads of spent shells and we go out and the music's loud and there's lots to see and I look down and we're walking on loads of spent shells.

When my mum was eight she got TB and had to go to some fucking weird hospital in the mountains and on Fridays they'd serve fish in jelly and she'd throw it up and they'd make her eat the vom and her family could visit but only through glass she was always cool with me when I was growing up she had no problem with trolls and games consoles and brands and babysitter books though she was pretty full-on about my grades. Trolls were fucking awesome they were so ugly and cute like pugs and they had friendly little eyes and their hair was a big bit of colour and they had loads of little outfits I even had a Jewish one that had a Star of David on it.

When I was ten the school I went to had a choice between religion and ethics lol I know and my dad was like a devout atheist so I was in the ethics class. The teacher was like this half-assed dumb-ass and one time she's chatting about boys and girls and like what you should and shouldn't do and it's pissing me off and I think about who she is where she is why she is and I know just what to say and how to say it I can sense an open nerve I can

see it spitting sparks I can feel it flicking round like an angry tail so I take it in my mouth put my little teeth round it and bite good and hard. She rises up goes a colour opens her mouth and loses it her eyes are like boiling and every word she says makes it worse and I just sit there in silence a smug little shit my face like ha ha. At the end the kids are like wtf and leave while she gives me one last bollocking then goes and finds my mum cos my mum was a teacher at the school fucking nightmare and was like “Your daughter has been disrupting my class” and my mum was like ha ha that woman’s an idiot.

He’s got a tattoo of Sharon Tate on one arm and a Star of David on the other and I said I once thought about getting a yellow ‘Jude’ star tattooed onto my upper arm and he’s like don’t do it and I’m like yeah no-one likes that idea except me repenting with a tattoo and he’s like repenting is Catholic and I’m like I know and he’s like are you Catholic and I’m like no and I’m like tattoos aren’t kosher and he’s like I know and I’m like are you Jewish and he’s like no and I’m like interpretation is creative and when Charles Manson got a swastika he trusted too much.

My mum was like obsessed by the Holocaust she had shitloads of books and she would always wanna talk about it and she would get a lot of shit for it. When she taught her kids history they had a day where they all dressed up and spoke about who they were. It was hilarious there were loads of little Churchills Hitlers Mussolinis and Luxemburgs running round drinking Capri

Suns and eating Haribo some of the other teachers were not into it at all but the kids seriously were.

When she was fifty she got really fucking sick that was before people had the internet so you'd spend your evenings in bewildered isolation it wasn't skin cancer but you could see it from the outside turning in on itself like something unbridged. It took ages to operate cos things were complicated she was vomiting the whole time and getting poisoned and what you know slips away I was sixteen a self-absorbed little fuck I failed her I would tiptoe past her room when I should have gone in and been like mum! fuck! are you scared? I love you! but instead I gave her the gift of bitter isolation and her life's love and her life's work said sorry you're wrong this is it now you're alone and she checked her options realised they were shit and kept breaking down in tears.

It's feeling like summer now I buy an ice cream and go for a walk to the Bierpinsel. There's a fountain underneath it which doesn't suit it and when I moved here it was full of ice. A family come up mother child grandmother. The kid is playing around in the fountain, trying to grab a handful of water. When he chucks it there are only a few droplets left but the grandmother acts it up nice and reacts like she's just been hit by a water cannon. The kid's delighted I laugh we all smile.

Give a gift of bitter isolation. Be the oligarch, your guy will call. He's found something, you're going to like it. You're a path she's degraded. See it sweep in. Look, a helicopter.

Still here. Find a child. Drape it. Move it forward. There are other ways. Give it something. Now watch. Let me guess. Tell it to read our minds and then let's leave here. Yes let's leave here. Who washed it away? No comment, no more questions. No more questions now.

I go to a bar on Oranienstraße. There's some random there and we chat for a bit but pretty soon he's like just moved here have you? think you're an artist? it's people like you who are destroying Berlin you fucking tourist. I laugh in his face give him the finger but I don't just give him the finger I pretend to run my tongue over it up and down to show him just how much of a creative little bitch I am and that really pisses him off and his friends are like leave it leave it.

When I get home my spell check is like wtf babe I can tell you're trying to say something but I can't figure out what. I consider uploading my entire fucking life to first-world-problems.com but I don't because that's bullshit. I reflect an image in Photoshop and it creates a skull. I Google 'Facebook Star' and take a screenshot because the returns are irrelevant. I update my status to find everlasting life and I tell you I mean it and I tell you it's real.

Let me take you to the park



I was like I'm gonna buy some drugs and I went up to people and was like 'Hello! I'd like to buy some ecstasy or MDMA!' and they were all like woah! you're talking to the wrong person! and I kept going round like 'Hello! I'd like to buy some ecstasy or MDMA!' like a kids' tv presenter or something cos I wanted to see how that would go down I was practically giving the thumbs up it was hilarious and I went into clubs and I went into bars and I was like 'Hello! I'd like to buy some ecstasy or MDMA!' and eventually this little guy not a dealer just some random comes up to me and was like I can take you somewhere where you can buy some stuff.

And we're like walking walking walking und ich hab' mich eingehakt and we're like walking walking walking

and he's like what's your name and I'm like look where the fuck are we and he's like we're nearly there and I showed him my phone and I'm like you got 5 minutes and he's like we're nearly there and my phone's got like no signal and I'm like shit cos I know my bezzie's gonna be calling me like where the fuck are you.

We get to a park and it's dark and you can look down a path and see loads of people and it's beautiful. And he turns to me and is like are you scared and I look at him and think if he had a knife what's he gonna do and if he held it in my face what's he gonna do and if he stuck it in my stomach what's he gonna do and if i fell to the ground what's he gonna do and if i started to die what's he gonna do and if he turned and walked what's he gonna do and I looked in his eyes and the look in my I was like what you gonna do.

We get to a park and it's dark and you can look down a path and see loads of people and it's beautiful. And he turns to me and is like are you scared and I look at him and go "I'm not scared of some dark angel taking me from this world". I swear it's true. Mate, I am so fucking lame sometimes but I had the phrase 'dark angel' hanging around in my head and it's like I gotta be played and I was gonna use it in an email to my dad's girlfriend when she stored my boxes in her garage but who uses the phrase dark angel to thank someone for storing boxes in their garage?

You know I once met this guy who was like I hate my wife I keep leaving pictures of myself in a dress round

the house and she never says anything and I was like I bet you're scared of dying cos you don't wanna lose your pension and then I went off and had an argument with some guy about mobile phones.

Guess who I saw the other day I know and I slept over at his cos I locked myself out of my flat wtf and he pulled me close and he was strong and he was hot and he was like let me give you some more material lol clever bastard and sometimes we look at each other and it's like don't say it don't say it and the next day I didn't wanna leave his company cos he just fucking gets it you know? Every thought every contradiction every implication he just gets it. And that problem's back but how can you call it a problem when he's such an amazing guy but the thought slips back maybe I can train myself maybe I can train myself and it's like seriously this again but maybe I can train myself. And there's a bell in my head not a sound it's a shape and it rocks back and forth creating a space and then something comes in but what does it bring and then something comes in but what does it bring?

I'm getting so fucking sick of the scene man I hate the way we're all pushed into bars and clubs like a friggin ghetto and there's a load of unhot pressure and I hate that sliding look when you get checked out as you walk past and then stop existing and I once wrote I'm a #lesbian and #proud of it but now I feel like writing I'm a #lesbian and #FuckingSickOfIt and now I feel like writing I #JustSaidThat and #FeelWeirdAboutIt. The best

bit of those nights is when the club closes and the station and the streets are full of chicks and we're on the platform and we're on the trains.

And the next day I didn't wanna leave his company and I also didn't wanna be like what are we doing? where is this going? will we be ok? and all that bullshit cos I'm starting to think the whole thing of being healthy and functional and defined all the time is pretty fucking sick. Cult of the Relationship, you know? And he's like I wanna lie on your bed with the balcony door open and it's warm and the room is full of sun and you're on the bed next to me and all I can hear is the music we're playing and you writing and the street four floors down. And I'm like I want you to lie on my bed with the balcony door open and it's warm and the room is full of sun and I'm on the bed next to you and all I can hear is the music we're playing and me writing and the street four floors down.

The instructions on my new bed are hilarious it's like an Ikea bed and it's a double and it's like do not attempt to assemble this bed single handed and I'm like thanks guys vicious circle much lol one time I was high and I was in a club and all I felt was good and if someone was a bit of an asshole nothing would happen cos the anger wouldn't come and we were dancing and I saw my sister in front of me and she looked so sweet in her expensive dress and expensive bag and expensive boots I just thought I love that girl.

We get to a park and it's dark and you can look down

a path and see loads of people and it's beautiful. And he turns to me and is like are you scared and I look at him and I'm like "I'm not scared of some dark angel taking me from this world" but I like whisper it in his ear and he looks at me and he knows I'm not scared in fact I think he's scared of me. And all the dealers in the park are like really depressed and unfriendly and I've never met a friendly dealer except this one guy in Haggerston that's a lie who was like you're the most beautiful girl I've ever seen and that was the night I was chasing after that hot shit curator cos I wanted to sleep with her cos I wanted to kiss her all over and cut through the irony and that reminds me of the time I got stood up by the beautiful girl with the deep voice and I deleted her voicemail as soon as I got it cos I was like fuck you but I wish I could hear it again cos she had this deep sexy voice and she was like I'm in my pjs covered in my own vomit and I always found that an aggressive image and I was so upset I went on a bender and I went into a bar and I was like crying and you ever hear the one about the crying hot girl who walks into a bar? Well, you're fucking hearing it now and what can I tell you I fucking love myself ok and I'm up my own arse and I prefer the spelling ass and when people have a problem with that I think arseholes love loopholes, you know?

And that time too I was like I wanna buy some weed and some guy takes me to this place and I'm like I've had this weed before it's shit it's full of seeds and I don't like the smell when they burn and I'm like mate

you are fucking ripping me off and he's like here have some more and that's like that Woody Allen joke and I'm like I gotta take a piss and the guy's like yeah let's go and smoke your stuff and I'm like whatever mate I just need a piss and we get there and there are all these guys sitting round ready to smoke my stuff and I'm like in the bathroom on the toilet the toilet again and I'm thinking fuck them I'm not sharing my weed I just paid for this shit and they think they can rip me off. So I leave the bathroom and walk out the house and don't say a word and it makes me think I shoulda checked they didn't lock the front door behind me when I arrived but what you gonna do which reminds me when you meet a girl in a club always pull before you leave cos if you leave and then pull and it's like shit this girl can't kiss well by then it's too late you can't say no although that's bollocks it's never too late you can have your tongue up someone and it's still not too late if you ask me.

And finally my phone works and my bezzie is like where the fuck are you and I'm like I just left some park and she's like fuck you're miles away and I'm like I'm with some guy who thinks he's coming with us but I keep telling him you're not coming with us and you're not sharing this and he's like I wanna kiss you and I'm like mate the list of shit you're not gonna get is getting as long as your arm and the car arrives and I get in and I'm like drive drive drive! and he's left on the street like hey! what about my ten Euros and I'm like I fucking told you you're not coming with us and you're not sharing this

and we drive off.

And there's always a love who you never said, a powerful lie of the heart and the head and there's always a line just asking to cross and there's always a fear things gonna get lost. And there's always a boat that's docked at the pier and therefore a sound like you better hear. And there's always that thing that rocks back and forth. There's always. That thing. That rocks. Back and forth.

This story was first published in the debut issue of STILL magazine

About Chloe Zeegen

Chloe Zeegen, born in 1980 in Watford, UK), is a writer and post-internet artist. She studied Philosophy & German at Oxford University and moved to Berlin in 2012, following a career in arts management in London.

In 2012 she experimented with Facebook and Twitter as a platform and medium for first-hand art and creative writing in her multi-media, interactive project Chloe Zeegen is a self-styled Facebook star. This project formed the basis for her contemporary fiction, also initially published on Facebook.

She featured in the debut issue of STILL magazine and has performed her work at venues across Berlin. “I love myself ok? A Berlin Trilogy” is Zeegen’s first publication with mikrotext and her debut eBook.

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