

## dissident friendship, a scene

Sunday, 11th of June, 2023  
at the U-Bahn Station of Krumme Lanke, Berlin

On this very warm sunday evening we gathered for the very first time during our free leisure day with five other participants of the „School Of Dissident Friendship“. A theme that has brought all of us together , but we never found out why or what were our personal motivations to apply in the first place. For me, clearly, to make new dissidents friends, or how Samuel taught me - rafeek - comrades in arabic.

So after spending an afternoon at the lake, we walked back to the metro station in this very bougie neighborhood of Dahlem, where all the historic villas are. We were talking loudly about everyday life topics, how to treat your hair, how to nurture it, about bad trips with psychedelic drugs and weed cookies. Samuel shared his drink, a special Mate-Ice-Tea and we were considering wether microdosing magic mushrooms, would support our creative practices.

Arriving at the station we missed that train „under the nose“, how you say in italian. A few of us set down, others were carrying their bikes. Maysa starting rolling a cigarette after having smoked at least ten at the lake, but collective moments of waiting eight minutes for the train had to be accompanied by a cigarette.

Maysa, who is very aware of german culture around rules and behaviors asked whether she is allowed to smoke at the train station to her german friend Lena, who doesn't like living in constant repercussions of german authority (maybe even of German Guilt).

I didn't hear the answer and was kind of craving for a puff of that cigarette, instead I observed how Maysa brought the litted cigarette to her mouth , inhaling - exhaling , while talking a lot to everyone around.

The moment she stopped smoking I leaned towards her, asking for a drag. Generously she offered me the whole cigarette, but given the circumstance that the small group was moving towards the incoming train, I didn't feel like finishing it myself, and really smoking only makes sense when being together.

So I hurried to follow the other, dropped the cigarette in the bin and weighted my bike inside the narrow seating arrangements of the U3 train, the oldest design of U-Bahn in Berlin, as it was the first ever railway connecting the suburbs to Warschauer Straße, the eastern Gate of Berlin.

Lamia, Tracy, Samuel and Aia were already getting comfortable in their parallel sitting benches exchanging on whether to buy a ticket or not, samuel share some opinions on the discussion of the 49€ Ticket, a compromised version of last years 9€ Ticket, which you could use for all public transport and all regional trains all over Germany, a dream !

I listened while still fixing my bike in a stable position, the train was still standing, doors wide open. Without any warning Maysa detached from the group and rushed out with a bottle of water. The following moments happened very quickly, maybe 30 seconds, max. 60.

Given the heat and the halfway smoked cigarette the bin started exhaling a tiny bit of smoke, smart Maysa dropped her bottle content in the bin to prevent it from escalating. But the escalation was already happening as the security staff, coming out of the mirrored U-Bahn hut, walked angrily towards her. With the blink of an eye I ran out, more to prevent Maysa from being attacked, then from solving the immense danger of fire. There was no danger, actually, only the one of a person wanting to fine her for a „bullshit crime“. Also coming from the lived experience of male german security staff showing off their violent energy towards someone they might target as subjugated, meaning female read people who preferably don't speak their language of authority and righteousness.

So I stepped out, full of protective justice seeking and feminist intentions. I was surprised by a different reality than expected. First of all I noticed Maysa's posture, she had kneeled her head slightly down, posing her hands on her head - showing through body language her hostility. A beautiful pose indeed.

He talked in german, trying to shift to a broken english. When seeing me he started pointing his finger towards me saying loudly: das ist nicht ok!

I was already annoyed, but still not grasping the exact content of the discussion. Between german and english he focused on me, with his finger still in my face direction, saying that actually *my* behavior was wrong. Me still trying to explain of how aware Maysa was by dropping water to prevent a fire, he insisted: „you are not a good friend!“

I was visibly confused now. Then he continued schooling me: „Your friend is a good person, you are bad! You smoke here and she is stopping the fire you created“

Maysa intervened this time, saying no we are in this together, he stopped her repeating to her - this is not a good friend. We kept on talking, explaining our innocence as we didn't knew it was not allowed to smoke. Maysa was good in what she did, and I agreed now, she was the real hero here. I was still a bit protective - and also a bit hurt maybe - I wanted to fight against a possible fine, which probably wasn't the best move. Maysa was excusing my behavior, meanwhile I was getting angry, as I was slowly realizing his agency to save Maysa from a bad person, like me. A fourth person joined, our audience in the train was tied to the scene, gasping.

It was a guy, wearing the same neon yellow vest, as his colleague, who was probably cleaning the station, emptying the trash bins and making sure of a tidy space.

He surprisingly started talking to me in arabic after reading my shirt with arabic letters „Fi Beirut“ - for beirut. He repeated after my shirt: Beirut? Enta fi Beirut? you from Beirut?

I smiled naively because I don't speak a word of arabic, glimpsing helpless to Maysa, who in fact is from Beirut. In this short break Maysa took over again looking at the first security personal: „We didn't know, we didn't want to create problems, we are really sorry. We will never do this again.“ I decided to maintain silence, he was still pulling his finger towards me and shaking his head probably thinking: this is not a good enough friend for you, why still protecting her?

Also the colleague now calmed him down in broken german - ist ok, lass sie gehn - let them be (they from beirut).

We backed off, slowly walking backwards, me speechless, Maysa wishing them a nice day.

Then the U-Bahn doors closed, luckily us inside, while we were observing from the slowly moving train how the two staff members continued a rather agitated discussion. I think the first one was still pointing his finger towards me, me still confused, but soon laughing with tears while excusing to Maysa for being a bad friend.

It was clear now, the first security staff observing from this mirrored cabin the cruelty of everyday life, being a black man himself, didn't believe the police could bring any justice - decided to once and for all, show an innocent woman in the claws of an exploitive friend, that she deserved better.

As in Martin Scorzese's Film, the Taxi driver himself a migrant working class and always silent man, decided got one short moment of glory to kill the violent pimp and boyfriend of his client, a woman he just drove through Chicago, ending in an epic shooting scene. He himself killed by the police, as a tragic hero with a short mention in the newspaper the next day.

In our scene though, there was nothing like blood or weapons involved, except the element of spontaneous solidarity, of dissidents, to a stranger, a new friend or even a colleague.

Who is the friend, who is the enemy here?

Was it maybe the first security guy demanding justice within our friendship? Was it Maysa trying to show her humbleness towards this working class man? Was it me trying to prevent violence from security service towards a woman? Or finally the arab guy from the cleaning staff, calming down his colleague to let us run free, without a fee and without further escalation?

The notion of solidarity might seem compromised in this complex web of miscommunication, but somehow all of us had a moment, a blink of dissidence, of friendship tainted by the humid heat of Berlin summer evening.