

A FEW MORE NIGHTS IN SAN DESVELO

THE RULES OF WATER



For the few special people on this plane of existence.

A Few More Nights in San Desvelo

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Chapter 1: The Damp Line

In the last colectivo from Puerto Esperanza, Mara Pizango sat by the window, although it did not close completely. The gap let in dust and, at irregular intervals, the smell of salt, warm rubber, and the diesel engine running beneath the floor. The air stirred the top edge of her papers. Mara held the folder shut with two fingers until she gave up and put it in her backpack.

A rosary hung above the rearview mirror. One section had been repaired with copper wire. Beside it was a faded image of the Señor de los Milagros, its left corner lifting from the glass whenever the bus hit a larger bump. The night driver paid no attention to either. He knew the movements without looking.

SAN DESVELO was painted on the inside of the windshield. Below it, the stops appeared in white letters: LAS PALMERAS, CENTRO, EL ALTO. A scratch ran through the O in CENTRO. Farther down, close to the rubber seal, there was room for a fourth name. Nothing was written there.

The digital clock in the dashboard showed 2:17.

Mara looked at her phone. 2:11. Since the departure in Puerto Esperanza, the display of the Colectivo had shown the same time. She did not enter the deviation into her notes. A broken watch was not yet a result and one finding was not yet a cause. In her profession this order was more important than most devices.

Next to her, a man slept with a plastic bag on his knees. In the bag, three loaves and a pack of screws were laid against each other at each turn. Behind them was a woman with two children. The younger child slept across her legs. The older one held onto a seat-rest and looked out, although almost nothing could be seen outside.

Mara tried to do the same. To the right was the Pacific Ocean as a dark area below the road. On the left the coastal desert rose in flat backs, gray under a sky without moon. Stream poles stood in the sand. Some wore cables, some only insulators, some not even that anymore. In Loreto darkness would have hidden movement: leaves, insects, water, animals on the shore.

She knew the coast from study and work. Nevertheless, the dryness was physically every time. The skin was tensed by her ankles, and water seemed precious in this landscape before someone opened a tap. In Iquitos she had learned early that much water was not the same as available water. A river could stand at the door and still a pipe remained empty. Since then she has been mistrusted of simple opposites.

The order in her backpack consisted of four sides and two tables. In Los Pinos several roof tanks were no longer filled during the nightly supply window. Two further street trains had been reported pressure peaks. The difference, depending on the assumed household size, corresponded to the need for a small block of houses.

The Municipalidad had initially written about a leak. The regional office had asked where the loss had been measured. No answer had come for three days. Then someone had sent a table containing three connection numbers that could not be clearly assigned to any street.

Mara wasn't sent for the three numbers, officially not.

Officially, it was to record the pressure ratios, arrange samples and submit a proposal for stabilization within ten working days. The case officer at the regional office had underlined the word stabilisation twice. He also called shortly before Mara went to the terminal.

"There needs something that works, too, when the man at the pump house is sick," he said.

"What man?"

Paper had been crashing. "Manuel. No last name in the list."

"Who represents him?"

"That's one of the questions."

Mara had opened the copy of the maintenance plan. Several valves had handwritten areas next to printed positions. A line had been wiped out and a little further left re-set. This could be negligence. It could also mean that someone knew a terrain better than the table that was sent over it.

"Did the municipality change the operation?"

"She says no."

"And Manuel?"

"He hasn't answered yet."

After a break, the clerk had added that the mayor wanted a pilot case for other places in the province. Mara had not written this on the order. First Los Pino had to get water. A model that was ready before the problem was usually just another form of the problem.

The night driver took his foot off the gas. Before them three red dots flashed on a dark Cerro. They did not appear at the same time. A little later two weaker lights were added further south.

"Dormido" said the older child behind Mara.

"Yes, said the mother."

"And the other?"

"The weather station."

The night driver looked briefly in the mirror. "Today already."

The mother didn't ask what he meant.

The first houses of Las Palmeras were wide apart. Walls of unplastered bricks changed with concrete, corrugated sheet and plots on which only sacks, stones or a single black water tank lay. Iron bars protruded from roofs for floors that should come later. Under a street lamp a black tube led over the floor. A cut plastic bottle protected the connection. The Colectivo slowly passed over it. The hose became flat and stood up behind the bus again.

Mara didn't turn around, she heard the short cockroaches on the underbody and then the engine again.

At a crossroads, the man got out next to her. He carefully took up the plastic bag on the breads. The screws were lying down and pulled the plastic narrow.

"By tomorrow," he said to the driver.

"If you're lucky."

"You're driving."

"That's different."

The man laughed as if he had expected this answer. The door closed only on the second attempt.

Mara moved to the corridor. The free seat at the window had remained warm. On the cushion lay fine sand in a line that ended where the plastic bag had stood. She did not stroke over it.

Behind Las Palmeras the streets widened. Small shops were closed behind metal blinds. In front of a Ferretería stood cement bags under a blue tarpaulin. A mototaxi without front wheel rested on a wooden block. In an open door a TV ran, whose light wandered over two empty plastic chairs.

The park appeared to the left as a dark surface. Six lanterns stood along the paths. No burned. Two had complete glass balls, three were only visible from the bus as masts, and at the last one a little briefly reflected the light of the headlights.

Opposite was the Municipalidad. Two lamps worked above the main portal. A third flickered. Mara recognized the lettering before she saw the building completely. In the e-mail it had confessed that she should report there at eight o'clock.

The Colectivo drove by.

"Municipalidad" Mara said.

"Tomorrow," answered the night driver.

"It's tomorrow."

He looked in the mirror. His face remained serious, but a fold beside his mouth moved.

"Then later."

The answer had to be older than the bus in San Desvelo. Mara leaned back.

After Centro, the building became more relaxed. Workshops, storage areas and low walls were on the road. An illuminated Grifo stood alone between two dark plots. EL RECODO was written in red letters over the canopy. A fluorescent tube buzzed over the pumping columns, although no vehicle was standing there. Next to it stood a two-storey purpose building with yellowish tiles on the ground floor and a narrow balcony above it.

"Motel" said the night driver.

Mara looked at the news from the Municipalidad. Motel El Recodo, room reserved, receipt is taken. The name was there without address.

"That's outside."

"Outside of what?"

She took the backpack.

The colectivo was standing on the gravel in front of the building. Grifo's fluorescent tube gave the same pale color: the house wall, the gravel, a pile of old tires and a dog lying under a bench. At the motel only the lamp burned above the reception.

The night driver opened the door. "Néstor is not sleeping."

"How do you know that?"

"He has light."

Mara got out. The air was cooler than on the bus, but not cool. Behind the building a pipe ran on the wall and disappeared under the gravel. A drop fell from a connection to a dark spot. When Mara looked more closely, no second fell.

The night driver lifted her small suitcase from the luggage compartment. A bike was wrapped with a strip of tape.

"Are you going back to Puerto Esperanza in the morning?"

"Six o'clock."

"Every day?"

"If everything goes well."

She didn't know the sentence, but the children on the bus laughed quietly as if they had heard it many times.

The Colectivo drove on. Kies jumped against the sheet metal. The wooden cross struck twice against the windshield, then the bus disappeared on the road to Centro. For a few seconds SAN DESVELO remained on the rear window to read. After that Mara saw only the red tail lights.

A TV was running in the reception without sound. A news speaker moved his hands in front of a map of the coast. Underneath the device was a fan that was switched off. On the counter there was a handwritten occupancy book, a calculator and three keys with heavy green pendants.

The man behind the counter was wearing a grey cardigan over a football jersey. He was perhaps sixty, maybe younger and only tired. He pushed a reading glasses on his forehead.

"Mara Pizango?"

"Yes."

"From the water authority."

It didn't sound like a question. He searched the occupancy book, found a line and turned it to her. Room 7 was described with her name, date and MUNICIPALIDAD. There were two riders from Chimbote above it. One line remained free underneath.

"Signature here."

Mara signed. "You are Néstor?"

"Sometimes."

She waited.

"Mostly at night." He took the key marked seven. "There is water when the tank is warm. It was sunny today."

"And drinking water?"

He pointed to a donor next to the door. The bottle was filled to one third. "This comes from Puerto Esperanza."

"The tap water?"

"Comes out of the line."

Mara looked at him.

"They wanted to know if it could be drunk," said Néstor. "I wanted to know what question came first."

"Can you?"

"I don't."

He gave her the key.

A staircase with brown tiles led to the first floor. Several pieces had jumped off at the edges. The hallway above had eight doors, four on each side. The numbers consisted of small brass signs. One to

four left, five to eight right. Over every second door hung a lamp. The lamp in front of room 8 was switched off.

Néstor closed room 7. The room contained a bed, a bedside table, a plastic chair and a narrow closet without door. Above the bed was a pressure of the Pacific at sunset, too red and too shiny for the coast outside. The bathroom was covered with the same yellowish tiles as the reception desk.

"The window is jammed," said Néstor. "Not completely close. Otherwise it won't open tomorrow."

Mara put the backpack on the chair. "How long does room 8 stay free?"

Néstor looked at the wall behind which it was lying. "Today."

"Only today?"

"Today, surely."

"The Municipalidad has reserved only room 7."

"Then it's true."

He went to the door. Mara followed him in the hallway.

"Is there something broken?"

"There's something broken in every room."

"Then let me put it another way: Why has it not been assigned?"

Néstor took the glasses off his forehead and cleaned them with the hem of his jersey. "Because I don't forgive it."

That was a complete answer, just no helpful one. Mara knew the difference from sessions.

Néstor put the glasses on again. "Breakfast is opposite at Grifo. When Rosa comes. If not, there are cookies."

He went down the stairs. His steps were slow and even. Down below the TV became louder, then mute again. Maybe he had just looked for the remote control.

He stopped on half the stairs and came back again. In his hand he held a folded towel, which was frayed at one corner.

"For the ground," he said.

"What soil?"

"If the shower wants to go outside."

He put the towel on the plastic chair. Mara asked if this would happen frequently. Néstor raised a shoulder.

"Often is a word for calendars."

"And what word do you use?"

"Today or not today."

Mara smiled. "Today?"

Néstor looked at the bathroom, the closed door and finally the narrow gap of the window. "Today was sun."

At the bottom, the outside door opened. A woman's voice shouted something from the grifo. Néstor replied that room 7 was occupied. The woman asked for room 8. His answer went down in the engine of a truck.

Mara didn't close the door immediately. The hallway smelled of cleaning agents, old smoke and some moisture that could come from a wall. In front of room 8 the smell was no stronger. The door was only different from the others by scratching under the lock. On the brass shield there was a thin layer of dust.

She went back to room 7 and put the suitcase on the bed. In the bathroom she opened the tap. First came air, then a short burst of brown water, then clear. The pressure decreased after a few seconds. Mara let it run into her hand, smelled it and closed again.

She unpacked only the necessary. Toothbrush, fresh shirt, measuring device, charger. The folder put it on the bedside table. In the upper table were listed the affected connections of Los Pinos. Elena Cárdenas, Mz. H Lt. 4. In addition a tank volume of eight hundred liters and three nights with incomplete filling. Two lines further stood a connection without resident names. In the column SECTOR was entered a abbreviation and crossed out again.

Mara compared the table with the layout of the next page. The houses of Los Pinos were registered as small rectangles, all of them equal in size and at even distances, although they were neither the same size nor straight on the satellite image. The main line came from El Alto, divided at Parque Cívico and ended on paper at a revision shaft south of the last built block.

Beyond the shaft three thin lines continued. Two ended without a symbol at the side edge. The third was equipped with a connecting circle that didn't carry a number. Someone had written next to it with a blue ballpoint pen: TEST, but the date was missing.

She photographed the side and enlarged the cut-out. Under the blue lettering an older pencil note had been erased. Only the printing of the letters remained. Mara put the paper diagonally into the light of the bedside lamp. She could recognize an H, perhaps even an N. Not enough for a word.

From her case she took a soft pencil, then held it and put it back. A rubbing through would have changed the file. Instead, she noted: Check original in the archive in daylight.

She took the pencil and wrote three questions on the back of the order.

Where's the pressure?

When does it fall?

What amount is actually missing?

She put a fourth of the three questions.

What's considered normal here?

The pipe in the wall gave a short sound of itself. No flowing, rather a metallic yield. Mara waited. It did not repeat.

In the hallway someone passed by. Easy steps, then turning a key. A door closed. From the Grifo opposite came the starting of an engine. The dog barked once and muted.

Mara pulled the curtains apart. The window opened to a width of her hand and then hung in the lead. Outside, the roof of the Grifo lay in white light. A truck was now standing at the outer pump. The driver held the hose himself while a woman in red jacket wrote numbers on a block. Behind them the desert began immediately at the edge of the property.

In Loreto, water would have been heard at this hour, even if no rain fell. A drain, a roof, a motor boat far outside, frogs in a valley. Here Mara heard tires on gravel and the electric buzz of the fluorescent tube. The absence of water was not silent. She had pumps, tanks, bills and fixed hours.

She set the alarm clock to seven. Before she extinguished the light, she checked the tap a second time. The pressure was weaker. She noted the time: 2:46 according to the telephone. No measured value, just an observation.

On the small desk she spread the order that she had only flew over on arrival. Three pages, two installations, a telephone number for emergencies. The municipality asked for an independent escort to start the park and for a classification of pressure fluctuations in Los Pinos. La Hondonada appeared only in one bracket: possible later extension. Mara stroked the word possible. In Loreto she had learned that such words were light in an office and heavy on a pipe.

She laid an empty sheet next to it and divided it into three columns: observed, reported, checked. Under observation she wrote the weak cock and the metallic sound. Under reported up to now only Néstor's remarks about the lines of the motel and the driver's sentence that Los Pinos sometimes had water, sometimes only noises. The third column remained longer. Mara wrote no cause in it.

The smell of the grifo, dust and warm oil came through the tilted window. A truck braked on the road, ran the engine and drove again. The noise in the wall did not come at the same rhythm. Mara stopped it with the phone: seven seconds, pause, twelve seconds. The third time it started later. Also, no rule became out of it.

She did not call the standby number. The pressure was low, but there was no visible pipe break, no smell and no electrical contact. For the morning she noted a test with Néstor and, if necessary, the barrier of the affected strand. Then she photographed the dry floor under the sink with a scale from the notebook. A photo without measure would have been just a reminder.

In the bed the mattress was lower on the window side. Mara turned the pillow around. The metallic sound came out of the wall again, this time longer. After that she said to hear water running over tiles.

She got up.

The bathroom was dry. The tap was closed. Under the sink the pipe showed no moisture. Mara put two fingers on the wall. Cool, but not wet.

When she opened the door to the room, there was a narrow dark line in the hallway.

She began under her threshold, barely wider than a finger, and stretched over the yellowish tiles. In the light in front of room 7 she shone. Mara knelt down and touched her. Water. Cool, odourless, without visible dust. It did not come out of the bathroom; between wall and line the floor remained dry.

The trail led across the hall to room 8.

Mara followed her, and she became narrower in front of the next door, expecting her to disappear under the threshold, and instead ending up one centimeter before.

On the other side of the threshold, where water should have continued to run, the tile was dry.

Chapter 2: The Chalk Marks

At eight o'clock Manuel stood in front of the motel holding a valve key over his shoulder. He wore a washed shirt, working gloves in his belt and a cap with the logo of a pump manufacturer that had not been around for years. Next to him was a white van from the Municipalidad. On the windshield three inventory numbers were glued. Only one was still legible.

Mara had slept less than four hours. When she came down the stairs, Néstor sat behind the counter and entered the occupancy book with the water consumption of the rooms. In front of room 7, there was a number. The field in front of room 8 was blank.

The line in the hallway had disappeared. Mara had photographed her before she dried with a towel. On the picture she looked like any badly wiped track.

"Manuel, the man said outside and gave her his hand." "Only Manuel."

"Mara Pizango."

"I know that."

He took her measuring case before she could contradict it and placed it between two canisters in the hold. One was labeled with cloro, the other with DIESEL. Both smelled like diesel.

The road to El Alto led past the Centro and climbed between unfinished houses. On the roofs stood black tanks of various sizes. Some were attached to concrete sockets, others on scaffoldings made of brick and wood. One tank bore the name of a hardware store chain, the line below it consisted of three different tube colours.

"Supply at night?" Mara asked.

"Mostly."

"What hours?"

"The official or the useful ones?"

"Both."

Manuel thought. "Officially twenty-two to two. Useful sometime in between."

The pump house was above the last closed row of houses. Behind it began the slope of Cerro Dormido, dry and bright. A mesh wire fence surrounded the high container. At the gate were two locks; one was open, the other without a handle put through the chain.

The air was cooler in the pump house. It smelled of metal, chlorine and damp dust collected under pipes. Two pumps were mounted on concrete sockets. One ran. Her engine generated a uniform hum that grew stronger in the ribs of the building. The second carried an AUßER BETRIEB sign and underneath with felt pin: FUNCTIONED.

"What's right?"

"Both," Manuel said. "It works. We don't run it."

He showed her the inlet, the high tank, the bypass and the three main strands. The indicators were not the same old. A pressure gauge had a clear disc and a red test sticker. Another was covered inside. At the third the needle stood just above zero, although Mara could hear the water in the line.

Manuel hit the glass with a finger. The needle jumped to 1.8 bar.

"Tauschen" Mara said.

"Stands on the list."

"Since when?"

"Since it's on the list."

She wrote off the serial number.

Mara closed her own pressure gauge to the test point. Manuel brought a bucket, although no water should leak out. Nevertheless, when the cap was loosened, a short beam came. He hit the bucket edge and splashed over the ground.

"Residual printing," Manuel said.

"Or a valve that doesn't separate completely."

"Both."

They waited until the line was relieved and compared the displays. The new device showed 1.86 bar. The clear gauge on the wall showed 1.8. The fogged was 1.5. Manuel had put a small addition behind each display in his handwritten list: plus, minus or hear.

"What does hearing mean?"

He put two fingers on the pipe. "If the needle doesn't decide."

Mara did it after him. The steel was the way the main line flowed deep, and a finer tremor over it. It wasn't a reliable measuring method, but an information. An experienced technician could often hear cavitation, air and a closing valve before a remote display reacted. He could also be mistaken.

"We write down the deviation of the instruments," she said. "And until they are tested, none of these ads alone decides."

Manuel took a stub of chalk out of his pocket and wrote three values on the wall, not on the form on the clipboard.

"Why there?"

"Because I look there."

Mara transferred the values to the sheet. "And if someone cuts the wall?"

"Then the person has already made another problem."

On the southern end was a large hand wheel. On the tube behind it was a printed white line. A second line of chalk was a finger width beside it. The valve was set to the chalk.

"Official position?" Mara asked.

Manuel tapped the printed line. "It's all about when the container is full, Los Pinos takes little and nobody washes at the same time in the Centro."

"How often does this happen?"

"Never at the same time."

He took the hand wheel with both hands and barely moved it visibly. The pipe changed its tone. No loud hitting, just a deeper flowing.

"And the chalk?"

"Where it worked yesterday."

"This is not a fixed position."

"That's why chalk."

Mara measured the opening angle, photographed the wheel and markings and noted the pressure in front of and behind the valve. Manuel gave her the level of the high tank before she saw it. He was almost right. He had been wrong about four centimeters.

"What changes the position?"

"Filling level. Hour. How many tanks are empty below. Whether to clean at the market. Whether the second line has air."

"And if you're not here?"

"Then someone is not me."

"That's the problem."

Manuel nodded, he didn't defend himself. "Yes."

Mara expected a supplement. She didn't come.

They walked off the line. The strand first ran visibly on a supporting wall, disappeared under asphalt and reappeared at a revision shaft. On the lids were numbers that did not follow the sequence. Manuel opened two shafts and left the third closed.

"Why not?"

"Bad air."

"Measured?"

He pointed to a yellow warning triangle almost completely covered with dust. "Last year. Nobody gets in before we measure again."

Mara painted the spot on her plan. It was not a habit to improve by a more precise instruction. It was a limit.

Below the Centro, the line was divided. A branch led to the park, one to Los Pinos. Next to the sliding box there were three chalk pieces in a cut can. On the wall were short lines with data. Some were blurred by dust.

"Are they in the maintenance file?"

"The data yes. The places do not."

"Why?"

Manuel looked at the chalk. "Because Alberto likes numbers that remain."

"And you?"

"I like water that arrives."

In Los Pinos the road became narrower. Newer houses stood between walls, building pits and plots on which no one had built. Black hoses ran from the main line to provisional connections. Some were dug in, others covered only with sand. Two children jumped over a tube that lay across the way.

Elena Cárdenas was waiting in front of her house. She had a bucket in one hand and a water bill in the other. Her house consisted of a plastered ground floor and an upper room of unplastered bricks. On the roof was a black tank. A bright line at his side showed where the sun had bleached the plastic.

"You are the hydrologist?"

"Yes."

Elena handed her the bill. "Then you don't just tell me how long you're measuring."

Mara didn't fold the paper. "What should I tell you?"

"When can I wash? Whether there's enough tomorrow. Whether I have to tell my daughter to shower at her aunt."

"I can't tell you for sure today."

"Then tell me when you can say it."

Manuel turned off the measuring case. Elena looked at it.

"Yesterday nothing came again."

"I know."

"You know many dry things."

"Today we measure wet."

Elena snorted, but she opened the gate.

In the yard there were four filled buckets under a tarp. In the kitchen there was a board over the sink so that the room remained as a work surface. Elena showed Mara the tap, the house counter and the line to the tank. When opening, air first came. Then a thin beam ran, which broke off after a few seconds.

Each bucket had a purpose with black pen: KEEK, WASCH, BAD, NOTFALL. The bucket for cooking was covered. In the bucket for washing there was a small plastic cup with which Elena drew water into a bowl. The emergency bucket was only half full.

"Yesterday he was full," Elena said. "Then I had to flush the toilet."

She led Mara through the daily routine, not as a complaint but as an invoice. A pot for rice. Two bottles for school. Wash hands. Dishes. The floor only where dust came through the door. Her daughter had long hair and washed it with an aunt in the Centro. Elena herself went to work unwashed in the morning when the supply window had failed.

"The average is on the bill," she said. "My day has no average."

Mara photographed the buckets and noted the remaining amounts. She knew that such data in technical reports often ended up as context, according to tables and before plants. Here they were the success criterion. A stable pressure that did not fill Elena's tank in time was not a stable operation for the household.

Mara built a pressure sensor behind the counter. The installation was clean enough, but the check valve was older than the connection. She took a sample and labeled it with place, time and temperature.

"The water doesn't smell," Elena said.

"Good."

"But it's not coming."

"That's right."

Elena nodded, and that answer was more than enough.

Two houses further on, water dripped from a connection into the sand. The connection consisted of a rigid pipe piece, two hose clamps and a coupling intended for another diameter. Around the connection was a strip of bicycle hose.

The owner put a bucket underneath it. "Just since yesterday."

"Since the shock, Elena said."

Manuel closed the small shut-off valve. He turned it not completely, but to a resistance. The drop slowed down.

"Close it all," Mara said.

"Then he pulls air when the top is opened."

"And so water can pull back from the ground at low pressure."

Manuel looked at the wet sand. "Yes."

She let the connection go off until a suitable coupling was brought. The owner protested because he expected water. Elena put one of her buckets in him.

"Today," she said. "Not as a new director."

Mara noted the risk of return. Knowledge of the location did not make a false connection safe. Manuel knew that. Nevertheless, he had let them run, as well as his usable valve positions were part of the investigation.

In the afternoon they went back to the pump house. Mara set a second sensor at the southern exit and a flow meter at the strand to Los Pinos. Manuel opened the valve until yesterday's chalk stroke.

Before installation, they calibrated both sensors at the same location. Mara let the measurement run for ten minutes while Manuel checked the tank level. One data series drifted by 0.04 bar. She marked the device and used it anyway because the deviation was smaller than the expected fluctuations and could be corrected later.

Manuel observed how she noted time, serial number and installation height.

"If you write down everything, there is no room for water."

"The water does not need a place on the leaf."

"Then what's the hand for?"

"To know tomorrow if the same number means the same thing."

Manuel nodded on the chalk line. "My wall does that too."

"Your wall doesn't say why you stopped there yesterday."

He remained silent for a while. Then he called the conditions: The container had been just under three quarters. At the market cleaning had begun later. In Los Pinos three pumps had jumped simultaneously. The valve to the park had clamped. Mara wrote down every point and asked which one had actually changed his decision.

Manuel was safe with two, and he suspected one of them.

"Then we paint it," Mara said.

Manuel looked at the list. "Maybe tomorrow."

"If he plays a role tomorrow, he will come back with a new reason."

For the first time he smiled. "They delete quickly."

"Only things you don't defend yourself."

"Not on the official mark," Mara said.

"I wouldn't have done that."

"I say it for the record."

"Then it's more true now."

Mara looked at him. Manuel put on his gloves.

She had him name every step loudly: tank stand check. Listen to market management. Read pressure at the Centro. Open south valve within one area. Wait ten minutes. Do not correct after a single display. Cancel if the pressure at the provisional end rose above the specified value.

"These are rules," Mara said.

"No. These are things I'm looking after."

"If you act on it, we can describe it in such a way that someone else understands it."

"Understand or repeat?"

"First understand."

Manuel put a short line with fresh chalk next to the old ones. The two were almost on top of each other.

At about twenty-two o'clock Mara and Elena sat in the courtyard under the outdoor lamp. Manuel remained at the sliding box at the corner. The sensor sent its values to Mara's screen. The pressure rose slowly, fell down and rose again. Pump noises came from several houses. On the roofs empty tanks sounded differently than half full, a hollow tone under the buzz of small motors.

Between the measuring points Mara went twice to the undeveloped neighboring property. The low wall had an opening where a gate was planned later. Behind it a narrow furrow led to a concrete post. At the foot of the post a closed pipe cut out of the sand. The cap was grey before dust. Around the thread ran a clean dark edge.

Mara glowed on it without touching it. An undamaged dust edge could mean that the cap had been moved recently. She could also come from the wind or an animal that rubbed on it. She marked the place on the plan and photographed it with scale.

"There was one before I built it," Elena said behind the wall.

"Did he ever open?"

"Not from someone I've seen."

"And the bill?"

"Kam was with mine for the first time two years ago. I was three times at the Municipalidad. Once they said that the number was being deleted. Then it was printed smaller."

Mara looked at the cap again. She wouldn't open it at night and without a clear line. An unverified connection was a checkpoint, not an offer.

Elena had made coffee, even though she wanted to save water. She only filled half the cups.

"My daughter stands up at six, she said. "When the tank is empty, your curve won't help me."

"No." Mara pointed to the line. "But if I know where the pressure is, I can prevent it from remaining empty again."

"Today?"

"Today I can see if water reaches the connection."

A sound came out of the pipe. First air, then a thin flow. Elena got up. In the kitchen water ran out of the tap. Not much, but evenly.

The pressure rose on the screen without reaching the tip of the adjacent line. The flow meter on the main line reported a small, plausible amount. Mara called Manuel and asked him to hold the position.

"I don't hold a position," he said. "I keep the pressure."

"Today you keep both."

Elena switched the small pump on to the roof tank. The pipe in the wall vibrated. Above them began to beat water against plastic, irregularly and initially loud. Elena listened with raised head.

"How much?" Mara asked.

"Not enough yet."

The tank was slowly filling. The house counter did not move. Mara lit the numbers with the flashlight, photographed them and checked the sensor behind the meter. He registered pressure and flow rate. The mechanical counter stood.

"Kaputt?" asked Elena.

"Possibly."

"Since when?"

"I don't know."

Elena gave her the bill. "Then maybe they know."

Mara had only flew over her in the morning. Now she saw a second line under Elena's connection number: Neighboring connection, Mz. H Lt. 5. A basic fee was charged for this. The property next door was behind a low wall. There were sand, two concrete posts and no house.

"Who lives there?"

"No one," said Elena. "No one has ever lived there."

"Was there a connection before?"

“There was a mark. Then there was no construction.”

Mara called on digital billing. The second number was active. Consumption of the last months changed between zero and small regular quantities.

Above them the sound in the tank became quieter. Elena climbed on a ladder and knocked against the side wall. The sound was now duller.

Mara asked her to come down before opening the lid. The ladder stood on uneven concrete, and a measurement was not worth falling. Elena took a wooden wedge from the kitchen and stabilized the foot. Only then did Rafael climb up with gloves and a lamp while Elena stayed down and held the ladder.

The swimmer moved freely. On the inside wall several heights were marked with pencil, beside data and individual initials. Elena explained that her husband had marked earlier Sundays, she even now always when something unusual changed. The strokes did not form a clean curve. They were a chronicle of days when someone had had time to look.

Mara photographed not only the current status, but also the markings. “May I take the names?”

Elena looked at the wall. “The initials yes. The photo from the roof not on the Internet.”

Mara wrote the restriction in her consent note. Rafael grinned briefly as if he had expected a more solemn answer, and became serious again when Mara wanted to check the meter of the allegedly empty parcel.

The counter box was not located where the digital map showed it, but two plot widths further under a metal flap. A new sticker was carrying the correct connection number; underneath it was an older number with paint painted over. Mara only cleaned the viewing window, not the housing. The number level was small but not zero. The wheel moved at regular intervals around a barely visible step.

Rafael connected Elena's house to the courtyard, kitchen and toilet in turn. The wheel at the empty plot moved on. Mara filmed two minutes and then put the phone away. A moving counter proved consumption behind this meter, not the place of consumption.

Elena brought three cups of aniseed water. “If you find out who that belongs to, he will also get a cup.”

“And the bill?” Rafael asked.

“He gets them first.”

“Half, she said.”

Mara read the house counter again. The same numbers. While Elena's tank had filled up, no consumption had been registered there.

Chapter 3: The Dry Canal

Daniela Rojas waited on the last paved road of Los Pinos. She wore work shoes, a light jacket around her hips and a cloth bag with two bottles of water. Behind her the asphalt ended in a compartment of lanes. None of them was on Mara's map.

"Which leads to the Seco Canal?" Mara asked.

Daniela pointed to three. "The one who is still there today."

"And which is this?"

"Regards whether we want to find back."

Mara looked at her, Daniela didn't smile, she went off on the middle track.

The Municipalidad had proposed Daniela as a companion because she was responsible for cleaning work in Los Pinos, Mercado and occasionally in warehouses south of the Centro. Her paths connected places between which the city map showed free spaces. She knew abbreviations, gates that were open during the day, and walls through which an earlier passage was still visible by color.

Mara wore a small soil moisture sensor, an infrared thermometer, sample bottles and a GPS device. After the night of measurement she wanted to know whether water leaked, leaked or ran in an old pipe south-east of Elena's house. She did not expect a river. For a loss of pressure, bad connections, an unregistered branch or a sink where water was gathering.

Before they left, they went to Elena's neighboring property again. The closed pipe plug was still standing on the concrete post. Mara had attached a thin paper stamp to the cap in the morning, not as a seal, but to recognize a movement. The brand was still between cap and thread.

Daniela looked at the stun. "The way to the canal does not start here."

"Where then?"

"I don't know if the line goes to the channel. Only the way."

Mara showed her the three lines on the copy of the old plan. One ended at the side edge, one at a circle without number, one under a later correction.

"Have you seen work outside? Digs, repairs, vehicles?"

Daniela thought. "Two winters ago, a truck stood further south. No logo. Two men had a roll of blue hose. Maybe for a house."

"What house?"

"That's why maybe."

Mara noted the observation with the inaccurate time. She asked about color, vehicle type and location, not a meaning. Daniela could remember a white cab, a dark tarpaulin and a flat tire. She no longer knew the registration plates or faces.

Elena came out of her house with the fuel book. The stand had fallen by two finger widths since the end of the supply window. This was in line with her morning consumption. She pointed to the empty neighbour's ground.

"If you open something there, let me know beforehand."

"Today we're not opening anything," Mara said. "We're just looking for the course."

"Looking is also work. People see devices and tell them you found something."

Mara promised to talk to her before a excavation or separation. Elena tore one side from a small calendar and drew the way that construction vehicles had taken earlier. He did not fully agree with any of the three visible lanes.

Between the last houses Daniela led them along a wall. On the other side there was a shell. The black roof tank was already mounted, although windows and doors were missing. A hose hung from the roof to the sand and ended there without connection.

"Does anyone live here?" Mara asked.

"Sometimes a guard."

"Is water delivered?"

"A mototaxi brings canister. The tank is for later."

Mara didn't photograph him. Not every tank was part of her network.

Behind the shell, the ground became brighter. Road tracks ran over flat stones and lost themselves in sand. In the west, the sun lay deep above the coast as pale disk behind mist. The Garúa did not come as a visible wall. It only made metal darker and the air cooler.

At the edge of a plot was a water tank on the ground. It was empty and tilted to the side so that the wind would not move it away. Inside it were two bricks and a children's shoe. Daniela did not put it up.

"Why are your work paths leading along this?" Mara asked.

"Because the direct paths are not always direct."

"Because of fools and dogs?"

"Because of orders. A house in the morning, a camp in the afternoon, the motel sometimes at night. When I go back to the Centro every time, I lose an hour."

She pointed to a low wall, where two rows of bricks were brighter. There was an opening earlier. Now her way led around the outside.

"Who decides what is a way?"

Daniela raised the cloth bag higher on his shoulder. "The feet first. Later someone with concrete."

Mara thought of the management plans. There too, a provisional connection could work first and later become official without the older decision being documented. That didn't make her safe or wrong. It made her story important.

They stopped at a garbage dump. Broken tiles, old tube clamps and pieces of green plastic tube lay between cardboard. Mara did not check any parts that were obviously from house installations. Daniela pointed to a heavy grey clutch under a bag.

"That wasn't there last week."

Mara photographed her without taking her with her. The diameter could fit to a larger strand, but the fracture edge was old. Someone could have brought her from another quarter. She noted location, not origin.

Daniela left the trail and walked between two low earth walls.

"It's shorter here."

"There's a wall on the map."

"Was there."

In the sand lay concrete pieces with smooth sides. Some contained rusty reinforcement iron. A row went just enough to have been once a foundation or gutter. Mara set the first way point.

"Who built this?"

"Someone with concrete."

"That's precise."

"That's all I know."

They went on. Daniela did not always walk the clearest way. Twice she changed direction without explanation. The second time Mara asked.

"There is soft sand in the front."

"You see no difference."

Daniela knelt down and crossed the surface. On the direct way, the sand lay loose and even. Later, small stones were sunk in.

"Supplier's truck," she said. "When one is stuck, the next one is going to go next to it. After three weeks, the detour is the way."

Mara checked the place with the staff. Daniela was right. Under the loose layer the ground was deeply upset.

The Seco Canal did not appear like a canal. At first Mara saw only a shallow depression between two Sandrucks. Only closer was a wide, artificially shaped line. On one side were remains of concrete ridges. On the other they lost themselves. The ground was covered with garbage, stones and dry plant material. No water flowed anywhere.

A blue pipe piece protruded obliquely from a broken concrete slab. It was sawn off at the end. The diameter did not match any main line that Mara had seen so far.

"That's old," Daniela said.

"How old?"

“It was already there when Los Pinos had fewer houses.”

Mara photographed cutting edge, material and location. The tube was dry inside. On the lower side, fine dark sand glued. She did not take any samples; the deposit was not fresh enough to confirm a current water movement.

Further south there were two sections of the channel that had never been connected. The first fell slightly towards the city. The second was inclined in the other direction. In between, several meters were missing. A drainage could have been planned and remained unfinished. It could also come from different construction phases.

Mara stretched a thin measuring line between two bars. Daniela held the first bar at the upper edge of the concrete channel, while Mara was reading the height on the second. After that they changed positions and repeated the measurement. The difference remained. The two grooves actually led against each other.

“Then water gathers in the middle,” Daniela said.

“If both of them were to run water at the same time and the middle was dense.”

“It's not.”

“No.”

In the missing section, the sand was coarse and stoned. Mara stabbed a narrow drill stick in three places. The upper twenty centimeters were dry. Underneath, solid and loose layers changed. None smelled of organic waste water.

She placed the samples in order of their depth on a foil. Daniela pointed to a grey strip in the middle sample.

“Ash?”

Mara rubbed a small amount between the gloves. “Fire cement or mortar. Perhaps deposit of the concrete remains.”

“Maybe carried by water.”

“Also possible. We would have to compare grain size and composition.”

Daniela accepted this answer without impatience. She did not want a quick confirmation. She wanted what she saw to not disappear from the investigation.

Mara set a series of measurements across the channel bed: temperature, surface humidity, soil moisture at ten centimeters depth. She numbered points C1 to C8. Daniela went ahead and placed small stones next to the places so that no one stepped on the markings.

C1 to C3 were dry. C4 showed a low humidity. C5 was dry again. C6 on the concrete residue was much cooler and damper. C7 and C8 showed nothing.

“If it's a lead, it doesn't run through the dots,” Daniela said.

“Or the humidity does not come from a wire.”

“Or both.”

Mara drew the series into her field book. A pattern with two wet points was not yet a course. But it was enough to check specifically for a later ascent.

Mara measured heights, latitudes and gradients. Daniela held the latte. The GPS jumped between two positions, although they stood still.

“Bad reception?” asked Daniela.

“Possible. The Cerros, device tolerance, reflection.”

“Then write possible.”

Mara looked at her. “I do.”

Daniela put the latte back to the same place. The second reading was within the tolerance of the first. Mara saved both.

They followed the canal bed to the southeast. The sand was sometimes harder, as if water had smoothed it once. But old heavy rains could leave such areas. In the coastal desert a track remained for long without being up-to-date.

On a concrete remnant Daniela pointed to a darker spot.

Mara measured the surface temperature. The spot was less than two degrees cooler than the sand next to it. The humidity sensor showed a small increase. She pushed the upper layer aside with a clean spatula.

Below it was wet.

He didn't shine and couldn't be expressed, but he held together when Mara squeezed him between gloves.

She marked a circle, took a sample and closed it. Then she placed further small probes at intervals. One meter further the ground was dry. Two meters towards the center of the canal again slightly moist. In between nothing.

"No coherent line," Mara said.

"You only scored points."

"Enough not to speak of a current."

Daniela nodded. "And enough to make another point?"

Mara put a fourth.

The wet sample smelled mineral, after cold concrete and something metallic. No rotten smell, no indication of wastewater. That was not a hygienic warning. Odor could rule out many things and almost nothing confirmed.

She took a small sample of water from a narrow gap under the concrete. It was only enough for a few milliliters. The liquid was clear. Mara labeled the bottle with a spot, depth and time.

"Do you hear it?" asked Daniela.

Mara remained silent. From the north came a motor, a dog and distant hammering. Among them no audible water moved.

"What do you hear?"

"Now the device."

The data logger gave a short tone every ten seconds. Mara switched off the acoustic confirmation.

Daniela waited. "And the road."

"I can't turn them off."

"Later it becomes quieter."

They sat on a concrete block. The sun sank behind the mist. The engine stopped in the distance. The hammering stopped. For this, individual sounds became clearer: sand that slipped from an edge, a bird, a loose plastic foil higher up.

Daniela gave Mara one of the water bottles. She drank only after Mara had opened the lid. The wind pushed a piece of thin plastic through the channel bed. It remained attached to an iron, loosened and flew on.

"Teresa said you work at night often," Mara said.

"Some places become free only when others go."

"The motel?"

"Sometimes the rooms. Not the eighth."

Mara waited, but Daniela did not explain it. "Have you known Néstor long?"

"Long enough not to ask for room 8 when he brings a towel."

"He brought me one."

"Then the ground might have been wet."

Mara didn't tell me about the line in the hallway, she didn't want to change Daniela's observations with an early interpretation of her own.

Daniela pulled a short furrow in the sand with the tip of her shoe and smeared it again. "In my yard I sometimes put things differently. Not for water."

"Why?"

"So that the way does not become too clear."

"What way?"

"The one you see when everything is neat."

She said it without inviting to a theory. Mara did not ask if the way really appeared. "Does it help?"

"Sometimes. If I make a fixed rule out of it, probably no more."

Mara did not write down anything. Daniela was in the conversation until it got any reference to the investigation. Nevertheless, the sentence remained with her because he resembled a technical experience: An effective adaptation could lose its benefit if only the last position was repeated and the conditions forgotten.

"Since when did you come here?" Mara asked.

"I'm coming by. Not here."

"On the way to work?"

"Sometimes. If there is a gate closed or someone leaves a dog outside."

Daniela rubbed sand from her sole of shoes. "At night you can hear water sometimes. Not always. Only when things are out."

"What things?"

"Motors. Lamps. Devices that show that they work."

Mara thought of Rafael and the hum that his frequency device had not shown. "Where do you hear it?"

Daniela didn't point to a spot, she turned her hand as if describing a direction under the floor. "It pulls."

"Can you show this today?"

"Maybe when yours is out."

Mara did not immediately shut off the data logger. She recorded time and last measured value, finished the recording properly and waited until the device was dark. Sensor and cables remained in place.

"Now?"

Daniela got up. She went three steps, stopped at the border between solid and loose sand and didn't close her eyes. She heard with open eyes.

"There."

Mara heard wind on the concrete ridge. A very quiet rubbing came out of the sand, perhaps grains that slipped after it. No flow that she could safely name.

"How does it sound?"

"As if something was passing by a long spot among us."

"Water?"

"That's what I call it."

Mara went to the same place, she didn't put her hand on the ground because it could have caused a sound.

"I don't hear anything safe."

"Good."

"Why good?"

"Because you don't say I don't hear anything."

Mara took the protocol. She wrote: Data logger 18:41 turned off. Daniela Rojas then perceives pulling noise under the channel bed, referred to by her as water. M. Pizango perceives wind and sand sounds, no safe water source. No visible current.

Daniela read the entry. "That's a lot for a sound."

"It separates who has heard what."

"And if you hear it tomorrow?"

"Then a new line comes in."

Daniela returned the record to her.

On the way back they did not take the same lane. Daniela first ran on the northern edge of the canal bed, then over a flat spot between the concrete remains. The Garúa had inserted. She lay on metal and skin without forming drops.

Mara checked the sample bottle in her pocket. The lid was fixed. The sensor's hose was dry. No liquid had leaked.

Before they went on, Mara returned to the site of discovery without entering the marked area. She photographed her soles, the dry sand next to it and the distance from the concrete. Daniela held the scale

but said nothing. The silence was not a sign of an extraordinary explanation; it was the concentration of two people who did not know what ordinary explanation they had overlooked.

Mara pulled overshoes out of the sample set. The left one remained dry after ten steps, the right one showed a dark spot on the heel. She changed both. Now first the left tip became dark. A defect on the shoe could not be ruled out, but could not be confirmed. Daniela went on on an old board. Where the board touched the sand, no dark print was created. As she descended, her soles appeared again.

“Temperature?” Daniela asked.

Mara measured surface temperature and humidity. The difference was too small to explain visible condensation safely. Garúa was everywhere, not just below them. She therefore did not take any soil sample from any print. Twenty poorly-founded samples would be no better than two good ones.

On the edge of the canal they found tire tracks of a small motorcycle. They remained bright. A dog ran across the sand and left light paws as well. Daniela pointed out that the animal was a control attempt, which no one had ordered.

Mara noted: effect observed person-bound, mechanism unexplained. Then she crossed through person-bound and wrote: observed in two pairs of shoes. People were not measuring instruments, and shoes were not persons.

After a few minutes Daniela noticed the footprints. Behind her shoes the sand remained dark. Also Mara's prints were darker than the ground next to it.

Mara stopped and raised a foot. The sole was wet. Not only cool from the Garúa. In the grooves stood a thin film.

“Did we walk through the site of discovery?”

“No,” Daniela said.

Mara went back the last part in her head. Hard sand, concrete, dry track. No water. She checked the floor next to her foot with a glove. Dry.

Daniela stepped aside two meters and went on. Her next prints also remained dark. The trail followed her.

Mara also changed the line. The same thing happened. Only where her soles touched the ground, the sand became damp. In between it remained bright.

Neither of them said that water followed them. They went on to Los Pinos, accompanied by two rows of dark footprints on dry sand.

Chapter 4: Two Sets of Records

Teresa Valdivia had spread three management plans on the table and had not described them as the right one. Two were so large that their edges hung over the work surface. The third consisted of eight glued-up copies. At the transitions there were no road widths, land and once a whole shaft.

The Archivo Municipal was on the second floor of the Municipalidad. In the morning, light fell through the high windows on the shelves without reaching into the lower compartments. There, building records, invoice books and project folders were in an order that was only alphabetically if one knew which earlier name had been used to put a thing away.

Alberto Salinas pushed two boxes out of the way and set a chair for Mara.

"We have a technical inventory," he said. "And another technical inventory."

Teresa didn't look up. "One of them is just that."

"Both are called so."

"That's the problem."

Mara put Elena's bill in a transparent case. She had brought the original, not copied it, and gave Elena a receipt for it. On the second connecting number next to Elena's name there was a basic fee for a property without a house.

"I need the grid stand on which this number is run," Mara said.

Alberto pointed to the plans. "What year?"

"The year the connection was built."

"This is not a year."

"Then we'll find the number first."

He took the bill and read it twice. The second time he held it obliquely, as if the ink underneath could show something else.

Teresa pulled a register from a drawer. The paper had become soft at the edges. Each side contained columns for connection, sector, state, date and remark. Some lines were drawn with ruler, others freely supplemented.

"Calculation is down," Alberto said.

"The old lists are here."

"Since when?"

"Since someone put them on the building records."

Alberto opened his mouth and closed it again. He had learned that the question of who had done something wrong rarely helped while you still needed the wrong thing.

Mara wrote three headlines on an empty sheet: BAUT. ABGERECHNET. HYDRAULIC EFFECTIVE.

"These are temporarily separate stocks," she said. "One number can stand in one and be missing in the other."

"Then we have three lists at the end," Alberto said.

"A crosslist."

"With three columns?"

"At least."

Teresa found Elena's connection in the register. The entry was created twelve years ago. Next to it was a second number, with an arrow to the neighboring property. In the column state was initially written PLANNED, later CLOSED over and both finally crossed out with a thin line. Under remark: TRANSFER IN NEW STAND.

"What new stock?" Mara asked.

Teresa flipped back. "This is not usually noted in the old inventory."

"Why should it be easy," Alberto said, and went down to the reckoning.

Teresa put two small weights on the plan so that he wouldn't roll in. One was a smooth stone. The other one was a roll of red tape.

"Alberto wants a stock that can be used," she said.

"I want to do that too."

“Not the same way.”

Mara looked at the three headlines. “I want to know what contradiction a line describes and which only paper.”

“Only paper is rare here. ” Teresa stroked an old property with one finger. “Even a wrong bill changes something. A shut down number can prevent someone from getting a new connection. A plan showing a line can lead to no one digging where it actually lies.”

“Then we separate effect and material.”

“And keep both.”

Mara nodded.

The technical list was found in a folder with the inscription ENLARGEMENT LOS PINOS - PHASE II. It had seven connection numbers south-east of the built sector. Four were marked as never executed, three as shut down. None of the numbers corresponded to Elena's neighboring connection completely. The last two digits were swapped.

“Tip error,” Alberto said, who came back with a folder under his arm.

“Maybe,” Teresa said.

“Two digits. That's the most likely explanation.”

“Then we probably write typos.”

Alberto put the folder on the table. “If we keep each Maybe, we have no usable inventory.”

“If we delete each one, we have a wrong one.”

Mara pulled the folder to her. “We don't have to clean up today. We need to find the connections.”

The current billing list was printed out and additionally available as a table on Alberto's laptop. South-east of Los Pinos, they ran three active numbers. One was the number on Elena's bill. The second was different by one digit. According to sector field, the third belonged to CENTRO, but according to the Landfield, it was a parcel behind the Canal Seco.

All three of them had little regular consumptions. Not every month. Not in the same amount. The amounts were too small for inhabited houses and too stable for pure rounding errors.

“Who pays?” Mara asked.

Alberto opened the payment view. Two bookings had been balanced with municipal billing. One appeared as cash paid at the counter.

“Name?”

““Only receipt number.”

“Camera at the switch?”

Teresa raised her eyes. “Not for a water bill of eight months ago.”

“I ask before I accept.”

Alberto searched for the receipt. The system showed a scan space, but no picture. In a paper journal the number was noted between two entries. The signature consisted of a short line.

“Everyone can have been that,” he said.

“Or nobody specific,” Teresa said. “Sometimes a messenger pays several bills.”

Mara entered: Payment available, payers not detectable. She did not write anonymously and not unknown. One sounded like one property, the other like a mystery. Here simply lacked information.

By noon they had collected five folders, two registers and a list from the property office. The plots south-east of Los Pinos were measured there. Some had land numbers, others only block letters. A wide area was reserved as SCHULBEZIRK. Next to it was a small rectangular PARK. There was no road plan leading to both.

Alberto wanted to transfer the finds into a new table. He set up columns, gave uniform date formats and replaced three different spellings of Los Pinos in the sector fields with the same one. Teresa observed it across the edge of a register.

“The original spelling remains amiss,” she said.

“L. Pinos, Los P. and LP mean the same place.”

“Probably.”

“If we don't unify this, you can't filter the list.”

“If you unify it without a source, no one will see later that an abbreviation may mean another stock.”

Alberto added a column ORIGINALFELD. "Then we filter the cleaned and keep the old ones."
"Good."

He looked at Mara. "We have been working this way for some time."

"By agreeing?"

"By adding another column."

Teresa didn't smile, but she handed him the next register.

Mara checked the tube dimensions during the process. The old plan showed a strand of ninety millimeters south of the last lot-pinos block. In a later material list there were pipes with one hundred and ten millimeters. A repair bill called couplings for both sizes.

"May be the same line, she said."

"Reduction piece", Alberto said.

"Or wrong delivery. Or two sections."

Teresa pulled out the procurement numbers. The larger pipes had been booked with a delivery for the park. The smaller ones with the extension of the housing connections. Both deliveries had left the Depósito Norte on the same day.

Mara did not enter the dimensions into the column GEBAUT. She put on two sub-columns: planned and procured. Alberto watched, but said nothing.

"If we find a transition on the ground, we know more than that," Mara said.

"And if we can't find one?"

"We know that we haven't found him."

"Teresa has already learned you."

"No," Teresa said. "She's just being careful."

"Did the school have been built?" Mara asked.

"Not that I know of," Alberto said.

Teresa was already standing on the shelf. "Not built is not the same as not commissioned."

She found a portfolio of the Education Office. It contained a soil report, an order for border posts and a letter that suspended execution until development. The plan showed six classrooms, a yard and a water tank. On the last page was a bill for the delivery of three connecting boxes.

"Three," Mara said.

"Can be a coincidence," Alberto said.

Teresa wrote the invoice number on her list. "Can."

The delivery had been acknowledged at the Depósito Norte, not at the school property. The recipient had signed with a abbreviation. This was included in another manuscript: CONTINUE SECTOR H.

"Sector H?-----"

Alberto opened the current sector map, ranging from A to G.

"Maybe Hondonada," he said.

The word remained between them for a moment because it sounded too early.

"Maybe something with H--," Teresa said.

Mara thought of the impression of a deleted note on her plan at the motel. An H, maybe an N. She pulled out the photo on her phone. Teresa didn't immediately enlarge it. She first asked if Mara had changed the original.

"No."

"Good."

The original was in the archive according to the e-mail. They searched for the plan name and found a roll in the back cabinet behind two cards of the old quarry. The paper was thicker than Mara's copy and torn down at one corner. The blue note PRINT was present. Below it the print of the deleted letters became more clear.

Teresa placed a flat lamp on the side of the table. The light ran over the recesses. No complete word was written. Only on the right edge of the plan, outside the printed net, they found another note.

LA HONDONADA.

The words stood in narrow script beside a dashed border. No question mark, no explanation, no date. Someone had used the name as if every person who read the plan had already to know what he was calling it.

Alberto bent over it. "This is a sector."

"It's a name on a border," Teresa said.

"On a technical plan."

"Technical plans also contain names."

Mara compared the location with the property map. The dashed border included the planned school district and the small park, but not all three connecting positions. One was located north of it. A second on the edge. The third outside the leaf.

"What does Hondonada mean?" Alberto asked.

"A valley," Mara said. "A lower place."

"There the terrain is not everywhere lower."

"Then maybe it's just the name."

Teresa wrote it on the crosslist, without quotes.

After lunch, an employee of the property office brought another box. He put it in the door, let the reception be acknowledged and left. On the lid was PARKANAGEN SÜD. There were bills for benches, planting pits, lantern foundations and irrigation pipes. A acceptance protocol was missing.

They ate bread with cheese over the closed portfolio. Teresa did not allow open cups at the work table, so the coffee was standing on a car in the anteroom. Alberto went out three times and returned each time with an almost empty cup. On the fourth time he only took the sugar bag.

Mara asked if anyone in the archive knew the name La Hondonada. Teresa shook her head.

"Do you know in the mind of heard or found?"

"Both."

"In the Mercado?"

"Perhaps as a terrain indication. Here you have many names for places that are not on any board."

Alberto sat down again. "My grandfather told Hondonada every valley where dark sand was holding out after Garúa. That's no proof of a sector."

"Did he mean a south-east of Los Pinos?"

"He rarely meant the same spot twice."

Mara did not write the statement in the crosslist. She wrote it on a separate sheet under ORT-MARKING. Administration and everyday life could use the same name independently. Only when an address, border or person connected both, they belonged to the same finding.

Teresa found a discussion in a protocol of the council about the development of southern areas. The name was missing. It was about housing, a school and a green area. The decision approved preliminary work but no construction. Two pages later a supplement approved maintenance for already installed connections.

"Preparations that are being maintained," Alberto said.

"That's possible," Mara said. "A set slider needs maintenance, even if the house never comes."

"Three sliders?"

"Possibly."

She marked the supplement as an explanation, not a solution.

"The park is perhaps the one on the plan," Alberto said.

"Or another southern park," Teresa said.

Mara compared the dimensions. Six planting pits, four lantern foundations, two water points. The bill was fully paid. A maintenance performance three years later called the control of valves in the sector La Hondonada.

"Now it's more than a name on a border," Alberto said.

Teresa nodded. "Now it's also a name on a bill."

"That's enough."

"For what?"

Alberto looked at Mara.

"It's enough for a visit," she said. "Not for the statement of what was built there."

Mara drew a simplified hydraulic tree on millimetre paper. The top was the high tank of El Alto. Among them was the division at the Centro, then Los Pinos. She put the three possible connections not at her plan positions, but beside them.

"Why there?" Alberto asked.

"Because we don't know their hydraulic situation. A billing address does not say which line a number is actually attached to."

She entered Elena's standing house counter, the measured flow rate behind and the filled tank. These three data could occur together when the mechanical meter was blocked. They did not explain why there was no surplus at the main counter or why the pressure on other connections increased.

"Can water come back from an old strand?" Teresa asked.

"If valves, heights and pressure allow it, we would have to find the connection, and we would have to check return flow and hygiene."

"Can a number of water use without a house?"

"Of course. Construction water, irrigation, leak, maintenance. Or the number belongs hydraulically elsewhere."

Alberto pointed to the word "counted". "And can a number show consumption without water flowing?"

"This too. Estimate, transmission, wrong assignment."

"Then every column can be wrong."

"No. Each column can describe something else correctly."

Teresa put the millimeter paper next to the property map. "That's why we both keep it."

She added a new line in the crosslist. Park: planarly available. Procurement available. Execution unexplained. Maintenance billed. Hydraulic effect unexplained.

"That's a lot unsolved," Alberto said.

"But not nothing."

In the afternoon they copied the technical connection list. The device was standing in the anteroom and threw each side into the storage with a dry jerk. Teresa put the original on the glass plate, closed the lid and pressed the start.

The copy was written in eight lines instead of seven.

A fourth had appeared between the three numbers that were closed. It began with the same sector identifier and ended at 04. The font was paler than the rest, but cleanly aligned.

Alberto kept original and copy side by side. "Toner damage?"

"A toner damage does not add any numbers," Mara said.

Teresa took the copy back before Alberto could put it on the table. She checked the back, the template insert and the glass plate. Under the lid no second paper was glued. In the memory of the device no orders were visible.

"Once again," Alberto said.

Teresa first photographed the original, then copied it again, and the second copy showed seven lines.

"So we're throwing the first one away," Alberto said.

"Yes." Teresa wrote WRONG COPY on it in red pen, noted a new sequence number, and placed the sheet behind the correspondence.

"Dismissing means keeping with you."

"Not as a connection list."

Mara looked at the pale additional number, and she didn't match any of the three active billing numbers.

"We don't use it," she said.

Alberto nodded. "And if she shows up later?"

"Then we documented where we didn't find them first."

Teresa turned off the copy machine. Nobody called the additional line a proof. Nobody pretended it didn't appear.

Around evening the crosslist consisted of thirteen lines. None was complete. Some had a building file without bill, others had an invoice without a traceable connection. Three numbers were settled. Three or four were technically closed, depending on the old stock. The school district was planned and never opened. The park was procured and not taken off. Maintenance services had been paid.

Alberto printed the table. On the screen she had looked out for one page. On paper the last column broke over and pushed two lines to a second sheet. He wanted to reduce the font.

"Not under ten point," Teresa said.

"Then we have two sides."

"We have thirteen contradictory connections, land and services. You may need two sides."

Mara took both sheets and put them side by side. The lateral break separated exactly the three active billing numbers from the old technical numbers.

"They must not remain like that," she said.

Alberto looked satisfied until she added: "Not because it's two sides. Because the upheaval hides a connection."

He changed the sorting by source to sort by possible place. Now contradictory lines stood directly among each other. The list remained two pages long and became more usable.

Teresa did not put them together, she put both leaves in a transparent shell so that no one would copy the first page later.

Mara raised three questions under the table.

What is actually built?

What is still being settled?

What influences net pressure today?

"None of them can be answered here alone," she said.

Teresa brought three more folders from a lower cabinet that were not filed under La Hondonada. One bore the name of the planned school, one named a road construction program, the third only number. In the road construction folder there was an invoice about shaft covers. The delivery quantity was greater than the number of shafts in the acceptance protocol.

Alberto started to calculate. Teresa did not stop him, but put him above his column for the time being. Two covers could have been a replacement, one could be at another construction site, or the decrease could be incomplete. A difference was not yet a disappeared shaft.

The school folder contained a map with a stamp of the educational administration. The building had never been built, but a watershed was marked as already existing. The coordinate was close to one of the three active connections. In addition, it was written in small letters: Connection for construction phase continued to be usable.

"Continue usable by whom?" Alberto asked.

"That's not a technical question," Teresa said.

"But the counter is technically moving."

Mara wrote the two levels separately. A pipe could exist, although a right of use was unexplained. A valid right could exist, although the card was wrong. If it pulled both together in one line, the accuracy of the drawing would fake a clarity that the files did not possess.

Teresa found a handwritten hand-over list in the number folder. Three keys, two measuring devices, one valve key. At the third key, she was back at the headquarters, without date or signature. Alberto wanted to know which lock he opened.

"Maybe none more," Teresa said. "But we're not looking for doors just because a key is missing."

They created a source matrix. Each position received date, author, purpose and confidence limit. The billing plan was good for numbers, bad for land borders. The property map was good for limits, but older than the management. The school plan showed an intention not a built state. Only after that did they look at the superimposition again.

"Then we have to go," Alberto said.

"To the border. First we clarify property, shafts and occupational safety."

Teresa did not roll the plan up immediately. She put a piece of transparent paper over it and transferred the three connecting positions, the school district, the park and the dotted border. The lines

did not fit neatly together. A connecting number was in a property according to the billing plan that had no access according to the property map.

“Are we correcting the situation?” Alberto asked.

“Not yet,” Mara said.

Teresa put a small source beside each point. “We do not correct before we know what reality we are deleting.”

She hung the banner over the crooked city map on the wall. La Hondonada was located on the southeastern edge, where several lines of paper ran out of the paper. The name did not make the place clear. He gave the contradictions only a common area.

Chapter 5: The Pressure at 2:17

At twenty-one o'clock the measurement protocol was on the hood of the van. Mara had entered the limit values with a red pen: maximum pressure at the provisional connections, minimum pressure for the inlet, demolition at visible turbidity, smell or return flow. Among them were the three measuring points and the clocks with which they were matched.

Inés checked every time stamp a second time. Rafael stood next to her and held two sensor cables apart, although they did not touch each other.

"If we switch them, we have park in the high tank," he said.

"If you label them, not."

"They are labeled."

"Then you can let them go."

Rafael let go of the cables, they stayed separate.

The pump house of El Alto was brightly above the city. Below the fence were the roofs with their black tanks. Further west the Pacific was not visible, but in the air there was salt. The Cerro Dormido behind them stood as a dark mass against a slightly lighter sky.

Inés worked at the weather station and was used to measuring series that ran for months. She wore a thin jacket against the Garúa and had her own bag for each device. Rafael helped her with maintenance, cables and everything that could be better checked by touching than by menu guidance. He had three rolls of tape with him, although Mara had only asked for one.

"We measure pressure and flow," Mara said. "No reason."

Rafael looked up from the sensor. "Not yet."

"Not tonight. If something strikes, we first secure the result."

Inés nodded. "And every procedure gets a time."

She looked at Rafael.

"I write, he said."

Manuel was standing at the southern valve. The wheel was just next to the printed position, on a fresh chalk line. He had already written the container stand, the pressure and the running pump on the wall.

"Today you don't change anything without instruction," Mara said.

"When a limit comes?"

"Then connect to the safe area and call at the same time."

"These are two things."

"Then first, make sure, then call."

Manuel put the valve key on the ground, not far away, just out of hand.

The first sensor came behind the main counter. Inés vented the measuring distance, compared the portable gauge with the fixed display and started a zero measurement. The main counter output pulses at even intervals. Each was visible as a small line on the screen.

Before leaving the measuring point, Mara simulated a short failure. Inés disconnected the data connection, not the sensor. A gap appeared on the laptop. The device itself kept storing. After reconnecting, the missing values were added and marked as being transferred afterwards.

"If a line breaks off tonight, we at least know if the water or just the radio network is gone," said Inés.

Rafael checked the battery level. "And when both are gone?"

"Then we have the local storage and Manuel's protocol."

Manuel held up his clipboard. It was an old board with a new table. Mara had the lines printed large enough that he didn't have to look for reading glasses in the pump house. Besides every value there was a field for observations. Manuel had already entered: Pump 1 sounds normal. Pump 2 is normal. The second normal was underlined.

Mara compared the clock on the wall with the telephone. She went four minutes ahead. She did not stick a new note about it, but noted the deviation. A time stamp didn't have to look right. It had to be correctly assigned.

"Total quantity here," Mara said. "If a leak has the size of a block of houses, it must be shown in this row if it is behind the counter."

"And if it is in front of the counter?" Rafael asked.

"Then it doesn't explain the distribution south of it."

They drove to the park. No lanterns burned. The masts stood along the paths, four with complete lights, two with open connecting boxes. Manuel had named the well shaft at the edge as a suitable measuring point. The valve to the basin was closed.

Rafael raised the lid with a hook. The shaft was filled with cool, standing air. Inés held the gas meter in and waited before someone bent over it. The values remained unobtrusive.

"They really wait," Rafael said.

"The device also measures when you are impatient."

The park sensor was attached to an old test port. When opened, air first came, then water. It smelled of metal, not of wastewater. Mara took a sample, filled temperature and residual chlorine into the protocol and sealed the bottle.

On the edge of the park, two men sat on a bench and shared a bag of roasted corn. They watched the work without asking questions. A child drove the same way back and forth on a small bicycle until his mother called it home.

"The lamps are not working?" one of the men asked.

"Today," Mara said.

"They have been saying that for years."

Alberto had announced that he would examine four lanterns the following week. Mara promised nothing.

"Today we measure water."

"You can see that worse."

Manuel closed the shaft.

In Los Pinos, Elena had two plastic chairs in front of her house. On one was a booklet for the tank stands. In the afternoon she had put chalk on the outside of the tank three lines: empty, half and enough by tomorrow. Mara wanted to estimate the filling level in liters first.

"Enough by tomorrow is also a value," said Elena.

"Then we take both."

They wrote the estimated liters and Elena's border side by side.

The third sensor came behind Elena's house counter. An additional pressure logger was placed two houses further to the renewed provisional connection. The matching coupling had been installed the previous day. Mara nevertheless tested it for leak tightness and had the check valve tested.

At about twenty-two o'clock the supply window began. At first only the pulse sequence changed at the main counter. Then the pressure rose at the high tank outlet. With delay the park reacted, last Los Pinos.

"Four minutes twelve," said Inés.

"Yesterday, it was about five," Manuel said.

"Unlikely comes into the remark, not in the measurement series."

Manuel accepted that.

Elena opened the tap in the kitchen. Air came in shocks, then water. The small pump to the roof ran on. On the screen the pressure dropped short behind her counter and stabilized.

Mara walked along the row of houses. She heard pumps at five tanks. Two connections remained silent. One resident explained that her tank had already been filled by a van in the afternoon. Mara did not enter it as a supply connection in the comparison.

The first hour went without limit value injury. Rafael controlled the same cable screw on the park sensor three times. On the third time Inés put the protocol down to him.

At that hour, the city did what it always did during a supply window. Pumps ran in short bumps. Lids on roof tanks rose to poorly fixed hinges. From kitchens buckets came into courtyards, were filled and carried back in. A mototaxi stopped in front of a house and left two canisters out. In the street, a couple fought over whether a hose should lead first to the bathroom or to the washing machine.

Mara left three houses with Elena, whose tank levels were approved for comparison. An older woman did not measure with chalk but with a wooden rod at which dark sections showed earlier filling heights. A young man had built an electronic level meter, whose display always reported eighty percent, even if the tank sounded empty. Mara noted both methods and tested them against the actual level.

The wooden rod was correct by a few centimeters. The electronic display was incorrectly calibrated.

"Then old is better," said Elena.

"Today this staff is better than this device," Mara said. "That's not the same thing."

The older woman put the staff next to the tank again. The young man sought the guidance of his sensor. No one had to defend his method just because she was old or new.

"If you touch them, you write it."

"I'm just checking if it's firm."

"This is an intervention."

He noted 23:07, connection manually checked, no change. Afterwards he held his hands in the jacket pockets.

Mara drove between the three points. Manuel drank coffee from a metal cup in the pump house and listened to the pipes. In the park, the Garúa had laid down on the dark benches. Elena sat in the yard in Los Pinos and peeled potatoes over a bowl so that the water could be used for the ground later on.

At midnight, her tank was just under half the mark. The mechanical house counter had moved again after the shock the previous day, but slower than the sensor flow expected. Mara marked him for testing. The contradiction was probably a device error. Probably did not mean done.

Inés and Rafael controlled the first full hour in the park. The pressure there reacted faster than in Los Pinos, but slower than the plan expected. Between the park and the southern end of the grid, pipe length, height differences or unregistered branches had to lie. Mara calculated three possible runtimes and did not write any of them as actual line course.

Rafael had set up the contact microphone in two places. At the first he only heard the pump from El Alto, dampened and changed by the steel. At the second there was a lower even sound below the current noise.

"Power frequency," said Inés after a look at the spectrum.

"Maybe."

"Five Hertz and harmonics. This time pretty safe."

Rafael moved the microphone around a hand width. The sound became weaker. He marked the spot with removable band and wrote net buzzes, confirmed. Mara liked the distinction. A sound was allowed to appear familiar and still have an ordinary source.

"If he counts wrong, do I get money back?" asked Elena.

"This is the decision of the reckoning."

"And you?"

"I confirm what it measures and what actually flows."

"Then write big."

Mara promised.

At 1:30 the pressure curves were quiet enough to get boring. That was a good sign. Inés sat in the van and compared the timestamps. Rafael stood at the open parking bay and listened to the line with a contact microphone.

"Just current, he said over the phone."

"Recording," said Inés.

"Running."

Mara was with Elena. She took the second sample of the evening. The water was clear. Rest chlorine and temperature were in the expected range. She labeled the bottle, put it in the cooler and checked the seal.

"How much longer?" asked Elena.

"Until three sure. Maybe longer."

"The window ends at two."

"The measurement is not."

Elena looked at the tank. "The water might."

At 2:09, the pressure at the park rose slightly. The flow rate did not change on the high tank. Los Pinos remained stable. Mara could read the raw values from Inés and asked Manuel to confirm his position.

"Unchanged," he said.

“Reserved status?”

He called it, the value was in line with the ad.

At 2:15 nothing happened.

Rafael continued to hear the line. Inés marked a small temperature variation as a sensor drift. Elena stood on the ladder and knocked against the tank. Just over half.

The clocks changed to 2:17.

At first the pressure at the park fell. Not to zero, only by a short, clear amount. A second later the measuring point in Los Pinos reacted. At the high tank the pressure also dropped, although the pulses of the main counter remained the same.

Elena's pump changed her tone, then the water stopped in the inlet.

The same short idle noises came from two neighboring houses. Someone called out a window. Another shut off a pump.

“Don't re-enact,” Mara said on the phone.

“I stand next to the key,” Manuel replied.

Inés read the values. Pressure drop at all three points. Duration first eight seconds, then a flatter lowering. The total amount of the main counter remained within the previous fluctuation.

Mara could be given the cumulative values of the last five minutes. The main counter had delivered almost the same amount as in the two comparison windows before. Behind the southern exit, however, less usable flow was achieved. At the same time, the park sensor showed a movement for a few seconds that did not fit the known withdrawal.

She drew three boxes on Elena's book. The first one was total. In the second distribution. In the third print. Then she wrote numbers below.

“When ten go out here,” she said, pointing to the first box, “and down below six normally go to Los Pinos and four to the other areas, the sum remains ten. Today only four sometimes reach Los Pinos. But twelve do not leave up here.”

Elena looked at the boxes. “The two are missing.”

“In the distribution. Undetectable in the total amount.”

“So they're going somewhere else.”

“This is one way. Another is that pressure and flow through a connection react differently than our plan assumes. Or that a measuring point does not measure the strand we assign to it.”

“How many possibilities do you need?”

“Enough so I don't have the wrong line dug up.”

Elena stroked the second box with her finger. “And enough water till tomorrow.”

“Yes.”

“Flow Los Pinos?”

“Fall.”

“Park?”

“Short climb, then fall.”

Mara looked at the line to Elena's tank. No water. The pressure sensor still showed enough to expect an inlet, but the flow was almost zero.

“Ventile unchanged,” Manuel said again.

“Acfirmed,” said Inés. A small camera in the pump house showed the hand wheel and chalk stroke. Nothing had moved.

Rafael called from the park. “There it is.”

“What?” asked Inés.

“The hum.”

Mara only heard wind in the phone. “Record. Open nothing.”

Rafael stopped the contact microphone at the line. The frequency device recorded flow noise, pump vibration and the electric power surge. No new rash appeared on the visible spectrum.

“I hear it anyway,” he said.

Inés came out of the van and stood next to him. She didn't put her ear on the pipe. She checked cables, recording and level.

"Acoustic perception of Rafael," she said. "Measurement not confirmed."

"You don't hear it?"

"No."

"It's exactly the same thing."

"Then we write exactly what we have."

Mara calculated a preliminary order of magnitude from pressure, line cross section and the rivers. In the southern distribution, hydraulically, about the proportion that a small block of houses would have claimed during the tank filling was missing. The main counter did not lack this amount. It was not an easy hole from which water emerged from the measured system. Distribution behaved as if they provided more connections without giving in altogether more.

"Leck?" asked Manuel on the phone.

"Not yet reported."

"The Municipalidad will ask."

"Then you say we're checking a pressure and distribution contradiction. A leak should be shown in the balance sheet."

"And if it's still one?"

"Then we find the crowd or explain why the main counter does not see them."

Mara had all temporary connections checked for visible return. No one showed turbidity or suction. She took additional samples at two endpoints and ordered microbiological tests. Up to the results, the risk points remained marked.

For each sample she changed the gloves, disinfected the outlet and allowed water to run into the sterile bottle after a fixed time. Rafael wanted to hold a bottle at the park while Mara described the label. Inés stopped him before his fingers touched the lid edge.

"New," Mara said.

Rafael took a second bottle from the packaging. "I didn't touch anything."

"You don't know for sure if you didn't touch anything. So, new."

He did not object. The discarded bottle was marked and not put back in the clean stock. Technical caution often consisted of small boring actions, which no one later read in a report.

Mara called the call-off contact of the regional office. She reported a synchronous pressure drop without any additional charge on the main counter, no acute visible contamination and running samples. The man on the phone asked twice if they confirmed a leak.

"No," she said both times. "I confirm a hydraulic deviation."

"The mayor will ask for a cause."

"Then he gets the status of cause test."

She asked for extended laboratory acceptance in the morning and two more sterile sample sets. This was less reproducible than a large leak and more useful for the supply.

Elena stood under the tank and heard in the pipe. "He's not coming."

"I know."

"How long?"

"We are watching."

"This doesn't help the morning."

Mara looked at the tank marking. Something over half. Enough for Elena's own limit when sparingly consumed but not reliable enough for the next few days.

"Today it is probably enough until tomorrow," she said. "For after that, I am extending the supply window with Manuel, provided the pressure remains safe. And we bring water when the tank falls under your mark."

Elena nodded. "That's an answer."

At 2:24 the pressure on the high tank began to recover. The park followed. In Los Pinos the flow was still off. No one touched a valve.

At 2:29, water returned to Elena's pipe. Only as a thin blow, then as a steady flow. Pumps started running one after another in the neighboring houses.

Not all the residents immediately switched on. Mara had asked them to start the equipment in an agreed order so that Inés could assign the pressure rise. House three waited, house five filled only the lower tank, Elena left her pump out at first. The delay took ten minutes and spared them a series of measurements in which every sound would have started at the same time.

At house two, a man opened the court faucet because he had to work early in the morning. Manuel only raised his hand and asked how long it took him. Three minutes, said the man. Inés marked the period. The attempt was not stopped; he got a real disturbance, cleanly labeled.

Mara went with Rafael to the end of the house line. There was a transparent hose hanging on a wall, which a family used as a simple water level indicator for their tank. The scale was drawn with nail polish. The level rose jerkwise while the inlet sounded evenly. Rafael suspected air in the house line. He opened the intended ventilation point, not any screwing. After a few seconds water ran without bubbles. The scale continued to rise in the same jumps.

“Then it's the tube,” he said.

The owner knocked against the holder. The hose loosened one millimeter and the level jumped upwards. She laughed briefly over her own instrument and asked to leave it in the list. It shows her when anything came at all.

Mara noted: suitable as a local attendance display, not as a quantity measurement. An inaccurate device could be useful if no one called it more accurate than it was.

When Elena finally switched on her pump, the pressure at the provisional measuring point fell less than in the first night. Inés repeated the sequence. The second time the waste was larger. Temperature, filling levels and simultaneous withdrawals had already changed. Mara resisted the temptation to explain the more favorable value as a result.

Mara went off again. The temporary connection with the new coupling remained tight. In the older woman the wooden rod rose by two finger widths. The wrongly calibrated electronic sensor showed still eighty percent. His owner had found the instruction and opened the battery compartment without changing the measurement.

“Tomorrow,” Mara said. “Today we need the actual state of affairs.”

He put the cover back.

Elena marked the new level in her notebook. She did not write well or normally next to it. She wrote time, height and: after interruption again water. Mara signed the line as an observer.

Inés marked the end of the lowering. Rafael took the microphone off the pipe. The hum had disappeared according to his statement. The recording showed no clear change.

Manuel was still standing next to the valve key. The chalk stroke and hand wheel were as before.

Mara extended the measurement series by three nights. She wrote the sample request, had the raw data secured twice and set a limit of the three connections assigned to La Hondonada for the next morning.

Elena's tank slowly filled up above them. This time the house counter moved. At the main counter of El Alto the total amount left remained as if the missing block never required water.

Chapter 6: La Hondonada

Javier waited with the mototaxi in front of the Municipalidad. On the roof rack were two bound barts, although Mara had not ordered any. In the footroom was a cooler bag with water bottles. On the windshield stuck a small map of San Desvelo, crooked under a transparent cover.

"The van doesn't get through everywhere," Javier said.

"Where is there?" Alberto asked.

"We find out."

Teresa sat forward. Mara and Alberto took the narrow back bench. Between them were the old management plan, the property map and the cross list in a closed folder.

They drove through Los Pinos to the end of the fortified road. Elena stood in front of her house and lifted the tank book. The morning stand was just above her own minimum marking. Mara showed with her hand that she would come back later. Elena answered with the same movement without smiling.

Before the last block of houses, Javier held again. Mara spread the cards on the seat and explained the limit of the work. No one went into a depression. No one opened caps or shafts. No sample was taken from a connection whose pressure and connection were unknown.

Alberto wrote the rules on the back of his crosslist. "If we see only from the edge, we cannot confirm the three numbers."

"Today we confirm the location and secure access points," Mara said.

"That sounds like half a result."

"It is the complete order for today."

Teresa set the date and name under the rules. Javier added the mototaxi's license plate.

"What for?" Alberto asked.

"So that his tire tracks would not be considered as foreign maintenance later," said Teresa.

Javier looked at his tires. The profile was almost smooth on the left back side. "Mys is visible."

"Then even more so."

Mara photographed all four tires with a scale. It was a small precaution that could seem ridiculous until you had to distinguish two rides in the sand.

Behind the last houses, Javier chose the eastern lane. It was wider than Daniela's way to the Seco Canal and carried prints of heavier tyres. After a few hundred meters she shared.

"She's just staying on the plan," Alberto said.

"Not on the ground," said Javier.

He took the left branch. The mototaxi tilted in a extended hollow. Teresa held the tarmac, Alberto the roof edge. Mara looked at the GPS. The point moved evenly southeast.

The morning was bright. No Garúa lay between them and the landscape. The Cerros stood dry in the east. In the west something reflected between the houses briefly the Pacific. The terrain before them was neither empty nor built up. Driving tracks, concrete pieces, low earth walls and individual posts spread over a wide area.

Javier stopped at a place where two rows of small stones suggested a path.

"The old driveway," he said.

"How do you know that?" Mara asked.

"There is the post from the map."

Alberto looked through the windshield. "I see five posts."

"The one with the wrong number."

They got out. The ground was solid, but between the tire tracks lay loose sand bags. Mara checked the immediate surface with a stick. No hollow point. They did not go further before they had fixed the edge.

The first concrete post carried the number 12. A second, twenty meters further, the number 14. Between both there was no post 13. There was a broken piece of concrete with a metal plate on the side.

Alberto photographed every number and entered the coordinates.

"Lands?" he asked.

Teresa compared the distances to the property map. "Perhaps border points. For land they are too irregular."

"On the plan, the plots are also irregular."

"Other irregular."

Mara knelt beside the broken piece. The fracture edge was old. In concrete there were rust marks, but no fresh abrasion. She left it lying.

The border of La Hondonada was not marked on site. On the old plan it ran as a dashed line from a dry back to a planned road. Mara transferred the two reference points to the GPS. The first lay near a row of flat foundations. The second in the middle of a lane.

Teresa took a compass out of her pocket. He belonged to the Archivo and was stuck in a shell on which INVENTAR 04-117 stood. She aligned the plan northward. The dashed line then ran not parallel to the visible foundations, but cut two of them.

"Maybe the plan is distorted," Alberto said.

"The paper is dry and the scale strip is right," Teresa said.

"Then the foundations were set differently."

"Or they are not part of the project."

Mara had both possibilities included in the field leaf. She measured the visible distances with a laser device, as far as the surfaces were safely targeted. Three rectangles had approximately the same width. Two differed significantly. A uniform house plan could not be derived from this.

Javier pointed to a flat ramp between the foundations. "There is someone with wheels up there."

In the sand there were parallel traces of a narrow vehicle. No mototaxi, rather a wheelbarrow or a small trailer. They ended behind a concrete slab, outside their view.

"Usage," Alberto said.

"Movement," Teresa said.

Mara wrote motion track, timing and purpose unexplained. Alberto did not twist the eyes. He began to use the formulation himself.

"If that's the border, we're already standing in it," Alberto said.

"If the plan is true, Teresa said."

Mara went back five steps. "We treat the outer row of foundations as a limit of work until property and hazards are tested."

"It's not on the map," Alberto said.

"It is on the ground and well recognizable."

She marked the point from which they could observe without going between the foundations.

From there the structure became clearer. Low concrete right corners lay at intervals, which reminded of houses but did not carry walls. Some could be pedestals, other parts of a never finished road. Between them stood pipe sockets with gray caps. No one gave water.

There were no doors, no roofs, no laundry, no electricity connections to buildings. No recognizable settlement. Only infrastructure that had been prepared for use or imitated it.

Javier walked along the outer edge, counting his steps and stopping at an elongated depression.

"Plant pit", Teresa said after a look at the park plan.

Six such pits were in two staggered rows. One grew dry grass. Two were filled with garbage. The other contained only sand and small stones. Next to them stood four square foundations with outstanding cable pipes.

Teresa put the procurement plan on the hood, and six trees were drawn as circles. The distances were roughly in line with the pits, but the plan showed them in a straight row. On the ground they were moved.

"Perhaps obstacles have been responded," Mara said.

"What obstacles?" Alberto asked.

"Soil, lines, existing foundations. Or the plan was never implemented exactly."

Between two planting pits there was a short tube perpendicular to the sand. It had no lid but was closed with a compressed plastic cup. The cup was brittle from the sun. It could be stuck there for years.

"Irrigation," Alberto said.

"Probably," Mara said. "Do not open."

It measured the diameter from outside and compared it to the list of materials. It was suitable for smaller irrigation pipes, not for the supply line. The allocation made the park more material without proving anything about its commissioning.

A lantern foundation was fitted with a rusted wrench. Javier recognized a cheap size that was used on many engines. Alberto wanted to photograph him. Teresa did it, but let him out of the connection list.

"Not everything here belongs in the same process," she said.

"But maybe for maintenance."

"Then it needs a connection first."

"Lanterns" Alberto said.

"Fundamentals for lanterns" Teresa corrected.

"The bill mentions four."

"Then the bill and the ground fit together at this point."

Mara entered: parking execution partly materially documented. No statement about commissioning. At the edge of a pit was a piece of black watering hose. It was brittle and open at both ends. Javier did not pick it up.

"No one comes here at night," Alberto said.

Javier looked at the tire tracks. "Someone drives."

The tracks were wider than the tyres of the mototaxi. The profile showed cross grooves and a damaged edge that repeated itself several times. They came from the north, ran along the outer line of foundations and bent further south into the area.

"How old?" Mara asked.

"Not today," said Javier. "But after the last strong wind."

"When was he?"

"Three days ago. Or four out here."

Mara photographed profiles and overlays. The tracks proved a ride, not its purpose.

The post of the planned school district was further east. They could read it from the border with binoculars. A metal plate carried the letters Z.E. and a number. Behind it was nothing but stuck ground and a series of small concrete stamps.

Teresa pulled out the educational office document.

"This is what we have in the school district," Alberto said.

"We have his post," Teresa said.

"You can't just call a post a post."

"Yes, I can."

Javier laughed briefly. The sound was quickly lost in open terrain.

A surveying sign stood out of the sand north of the post. The concrete was old and chipped off on one side, but the upper half wore blue color, strong and hardly dusty. A single brush stroke ran across the edge.

"New," Alberto said.

Mara looked at him through the binoculars. "Newer than the post. As new, we do not know."

"The color is the same as on urban markings," Teresa said.

"Blue is not a competence."

They noted color and condition. Teresa photographed with zoom. No one approached closer.

According to Kreuzlist, the first of the three alleged connections was close to the outer border. A grey pipe cut between two concrete slabs. From their safe point the cap was visible. Next to her was something bright.

Mara put on gloves and approached only to the fixed line. With the binoculars she recognized a short piece of sealing wire. It was silver, not corroded and free from sand. The cut off end shone.

"May have been exposed by the wind," Alberto said.

"Can," Mara said.

"Or recently used."

“Also possible.”

She photographed it with scale from a distance. Around the cap was a narrow clean spot. As at the neighboring connection of Elena could have taken place a movement. It could also have been maintenance long ago if the location was protected from wind.

“Are we opening?” asked Alberto.

“No.”

“The connection is almost on the edge.”

“Almost is not occupational safety.”

Mara pointed to a dark depression two meters behind it. Under a thin sand cover an open shaft could lie. They did not know how the pipes went, nor whether pressure, return flow or contaminated standing water emanated when opening. Property and responsibility were also unexplained.

She threw a small sandbag at the edge of the depression from a safe distance. The surface broke in and slipped several centimeters after it. Underneath it appeared a straight dark edge.

“Deck?” Alberto asked.

“Or concrete edge.”

Mara marked the position as a possible shaft opening. A person could have broken in with one step. The decision not to go further needed no additional justification afterwards.

Teresa photographed the break-in and the untouched area next to it. “When we come back, someone first has to secure the edge.”

“Barricade, gas testing, rescue facility,” Mara said. “And a plan that we can make no pressure without taking the supply of Los Pinos.”

Alberto wrote the list. “This is more than a visit.”

“Yes.”

“They knew that before.”

“I suspected it. Now we have a concrete danger.”

He looked at the dark edge. “Then it is not going in also a result.”

“An important.”

“We come back with clearance, shaft plan, gas measurement and shut-off, she said.”

“Then it takes time,” Alberto said.

“Yes.”

“And if someone comes back in time?”

“Then we document the change. We do not create any risk today to anticipate a possible change.”

Teresa put the camera down. “This comes into the protocol.”

They went further along the border. Javier put small numbered wooden sticks at the safe observation points. He did not hit them deeply so that no one thought they were measuring marks. Mara took surface measurements, but no water sample. The bottom on the edge was dry.

On the southern corner stood a kerb of three meters long. It began and ended in the sand. Its edge was cleanly aligned. Behind it lay a wide area on which the ground was compacted.

“Street,” said Javier.

“Part of a street,” Teresa said.

“When it leads somewhere, sometimes a part is enough.”

Javier continued his direction with his eyes. The compacted area turned off behind a back of the terrain. From her position it was impossible to see if she led to the Canal Seco or deeper to La Hondonada.

Mara set the end of the border crossing there. Further south, the ground became confusing. Several valleys could contain shafts or only blown out sand.

They stood for a while in the bright morning. Without Garúa there were no areas that disappeared, and no sounds that became audible only after the devices were switched off. The place was not hidden. It was hard to read. All visible was too little for one settlement and too much for an empty area.

From the edge Mara counted nine possible foundations, six planting pits, four lantern foundations, five numbered posts and at least three pipe staves. On no one was a house. On no property was there a

sign with owner or construction stop. An empty beverage bottle stuck between two stones. The label was new enough to wear paint, but wind could have brought it off the driveway.

Alberto compared the crowd with the files. "The plan shows more land."

"We don't see the whole area," Teresa said.

"And the school should be bigger."

"We see their posts."

"You are very happy about this post."

"He is the only one that fits exactly to a file."

Javier stood by the lane and looked back to Los Pinos. From here the last houses seemed closer than Mara had expected after the trip. The black tanks were clearly visible.

"If there are pumps running, you would have to hear them," he said.

The wind came from the west. A motor was heard, but it could come from a road behind the houses. No sound could be attributed to a tank.

Mara noted visual connection to Los Pinos, acoustic connection unexplained. Not because the set sounded important, but because later pressure measurement would need distances and runtimes.

Alberto read the numbers taken. Teresa compared them to her crosslist. A post number matched the property map. The school post was in line with the educational document. No pipe stint was visible on one of the three active billing numbers.

"So no connection yet," Alberto said.

"A spatial one," Mara said. "No clear technical one."

It ordered three things for the next phase: verification of ownership and assignment rights, security inspection of possible shafts and positioning of the lines from outside. The three active connection numbers should be checked against counters, materials and old delivery documents.

Teresa completed a fourth task: historical aerial photographs and earlier surveying stands. Alberto added a fifth: payment documents of maintenance orders. Javier offered to ask the normal travel books of the Colectivos for stopping south of Los Pinos.

"No stories gathering," Mara said.

"Times and places," Javier said. "Whoever stops there, when and why, if there is a reason."

"Then yes. No question about ghosts or disappeared neighborhoods."

Alberto looked at the foundations again. "We would have to have only a quarter for that."

"We have an administrative name," Teresa said.

"And things in the ground," Mara said. "That's enough for work."

"And guarding?" Teresa asked.

Mara looked at the tire tracks. "No covert surveillance. We can document the access to the normal routes. Javier doesn't drive here alone at night."

"If I hadn't been doing this, Javier said."

He collected the bar, and the little observation bars remained on the edge.

On the way back, Javier took the same trail. Teresa sat in front again and held the GPS device on her knees. Alberto stopped the time from the first wooden stick to Elena's road.

"Four minutes thirty-eight," he said.

"We drove slowly," Javier said.

"As on the way out."

The next safe turning point turned Javier. They drove the track a second time to compare distance and time. He said he was keeping the same speed. Mara observed the GPS, Teresa the reference points.

This time the first wooden stick appeared later. The journey lasted five minutes twenty-one seconds. GPS spent a distance of almost three hundred meters longer.

"We took the eastern lane," Alberto said.

"No," said Javier.

Teresa pointed back. "We are past posts 12 and the tilted tank."

"Perhaps the GPS has left out points for the first time," Mara said.

"And the time?" asked Alberto.

"Speed, evasiveness, beginning of measurement."

Javier shook his head, not violently. "I started on the same stone."

They took a third measurement, this time not with the car. Teresa stayed at the starting point and photographed the clock of her phone next to the stone. Mara and Alberto went with a measuring wheel up to the tilted tank without any shortcut and without leaving the lane. Javier waited there with the engine switched off.

After two hundred meters, sand stuck on the wheel. Alberto cleaned it and marked the spot; the value before it was preserved. A straight comparison was no longer possible, but the error could be narrowed down. Teresa reported via radio that a van had happened in the meantime the starting point. No one knew if he took another way.

They compared the measuring wheel, GPS and odometers on the tank. None of the three values matched both rides. The deviation of the measuring wheel was smaller, but its distance ended at a different point than the vehicle measurement. Mara drew three lines into her notebook and wrote the conditions next to it.

Javier wanted to drive again. Mara refused. The underground got warmer, the wind stronger, and they had no additional safety for a fourth track. Repeating was only when she knew the conditions and did not tire the people.

On the way back Teresa stopped at one of the active connections. A woman named Ofelia showed them a lockable concrete box with a meter whose seal was intact. Her house was behind a wall and was not visible from the first measuring point. Twice a week, a relative brought food; water came according to a plan that stood on a laminated note on the inside of the lid.

"Is the plan true?" Mara asked.

"Mostly," said Ofelia. "If not, call Javier."

Javier nodded. His travel sheet was not only a track record. It was also the connection between a schedule in the office and a person behind the wall.

Ofelia did not allow them to document connection and surroundings, the courtyard. Mara put the border into the recording sheet. The line disappeared after the meter in a protective tube whose color was newer than the concrete. A repair date was not in the file. Ofelia remembered two men, a white car and a Tuesday but not the year.

"That's enough to look for," Teresa said. "Not to enter anything."

Mara saved both routes. In the protocol she wrote conditions, possible sources of error and Javier's statement. She did not measure the values.

When they reached Los Pinos, Elena's house was where it should be. The tank was still above their minimum marking. Behind them lay La Hondonada in full daylight, neither hidden nor entered.

Javier recorded two distances on his travel sheet. Mara took over both.

Chapter 7: What People Do

Mara wrote four headlines on a clipboard: observation. Possible effect. Security limit. Decision.

Teresa looked over her shoulder. "No column for rule?"

"Not yet."

"Alberto will miss her."

"He gets them if we have one."

They had a meeting canceled in the morning in the municipal hall. Instead of sitting Manuel, Maritza, Javier, Néstor and Daniela at one table, they wanted to see their decisions where they were made. The question of the day was easier to formulate than to answer: How does a person in charge recognize that she has to change something?

Manuel was standing in front of the southern valve in the pump house of El Alto. The chalk spread from the previous day was still visible. The tank was just under three quarters, the market had finished cleaning and in Los Pinos most tanks were half full or higher after the extended supply.

"Today, the official position would be almost right," he said.

"Almost?" Mara asked.

"If the pressure behind the park doesn't rise already."

He pointed to the clear gauge. Mara compared it to her portable device. The deviation was small.

"What are you doing?"

Manuel took the valve key but did not open it to the chalk line. He stopped a narrow movement in front of it and waited. The pipe changed its tone. After one minute, the pressure rose in Los Pinos without reaching the fixed limit at the provisional connection.

"They ignore the last usable condition," Mara said.

"That was useful yesterday."

"What observation was crucial today?"

"Pressure at the park. Container stand only confirms that I may open."

Mara filled the four columns. Observation: increasing pressure on the parking track. Possible effect: pressure tip at southern connections. Safety limit: set maximum value and no visible leakage. Decision: stay under last chalk line and check again after one minute. Responsible: Manuel.

"What if you're sick?"

"Then someone needs to know why the chalk is not enough."

"Can we describe this as a pressure corridor?"

Manuel called a lower and upper value. Then he added that a single gauge was not enough as long as the old indicators were unchecked.

"This is going to the security border," Mara said.

"No," said Manuel. "To observe. The border remains, even if the device is bad."

Mara crossed the line and put it in the first column. Teresa made a small sign next to it. Not as a correction, but thus remained visible that the classification had been changed during the work.

Manuel led them to the second pump. On the sign stood still OUTER ESTABLISHMENT and underneath FUNCTIONED. A replacement had tried to turn it on at the weekend because the lower word seemed more reassuring than the upper one. Manuel had secured the main switch with a lock.

"This is not a local decision," Mara said.

"No. The pump remains out until bearings and seals are made."

"Then why does it work?"

"Because the engine is running. Only the pump must not run."

Mara had a new sign formulated: MOTOR TESTABLE - DO NOT REMOVAL PUMP. The condition description had to be more precise, not more flexible. Manuel removed the old felt pen word only after the new sign hung.

He showed a different habit on a smaller valve. Before opening, he knocked twice against the pipe.

"For what?"

"To hear if there is air."

Mara compared the sound to full and partially ventilated line. The difference was audible, but only in the immediate vicinity. A portable air separator confirmed an air bag at second condition.

"Usuable," she said. "But not as a sole release."

"It never was."

She added: knock tone as a hint; venting and pressure testing as a confirmation. Manuel was satisfied because his handle did not disappear as a superstition and had to do no more than he could.

At Mercado Maritza was busy with her juice car. She had not built the car at his marked parking space, but half a width further west. The canopy was slanted. Two boxes were standing under the table, one on the shadow side.

"The line is there," said the market overseer, pointing to a yellow mark on the ground.

"The sun is here," Maritza said.

She pressed oranges while Mara watched. Clean fruits were separated from shells and waste. The water canister stood elevated, the drain led into a closed bucket. Maritza moved the car in the course of the morning when the sun walked under the canopy or Garúa came from the north side.

"Why not just a bigger roof?"

"Then I block the way and collect more dust."

Mara measured the distances. On the yellow parking lot the cleaning water ran badly to the drain and stopped under a wheel. Half a width west the ground had a slope. The shift kept the work area dry without narrowing the passage.

While they measured, a van came through the market passage. Maritza folded the side shelf and pulled back the front handle a hand-width. The car remained within the escape line. The van could pass without touching a box.

"When I'm really into yellow, I have to go down completely," she said.

The market supervisor himself took the distance off. From his position at the entrance, the western shift had seemed like a narrowing. From the direction of travel the path was wider.

"Then the mark must be new, he said."

"Or it just marks the border, not the wheels," Mara said.

They temporarily glued two short strips to the places that had to remain free. Maritza could place the car between it by sun and flow. The supervisor noted width, not exact position.

Mara also checked the cleaning. Maritza wiped the press after each series of fruits, but changed the cloth only at noon. The damp fabric lay between the uses folded on the side of the wagon.

"That's hygienically risky," Mara said.

Maritza took a second cloth from a container. "When I hang it open, dust comes on it."

They found a solution within the fixed limit: several clean cloths in a closed container, used separately, no reuse without laundry. The position of the car remained flexible. Separation clean and not needed.

"Not everything has to be decided locally," Teresa said.

"Luckily," Maritza said. "Otherwise, I need more clipboards than oranges."

"Security limits?"

Maritza pointed to the marked escape line of the rescue route, the closed containers and the distance to raw fish. "Not above. Not open. Not there."

The market overseer was smoking himself. "It always puts limes in the shade, keeping them fresh."

Mara checked the temperatures of two boxes, the difference was small but there was one, and then the guard pointed to a red ribbon on the handle of the car.

"This protects against bad sales."

"How?" Mara asked.

"Since it hangs there, she sells more."

Maritza did not look up. "Since it hangs there, I am closer to the process and start earlier."

Mara left the tape out of the fieldsheet. She didn't write every habit just because someone claimed effect. The earlier start time could be compared to sales.

A second dealer always put her knives with the tip to the east, according to her own statement, so that they remained sharp. The blades were dull. Mara asked for cleaning and storage. One lay wet in a drawer.

"The direction is not the problem," she said. "The moisture is."

She did not write down a local rule. She pointed to dry storage and safe grinding. Local knowledge was not a protective word for a risky practice.

Javier waited at the southern entrance of Mercado. For the next station he offered two paths. The short led through Centro. The other turned off at the park and was longer on the map.

"Which is better?" Mara asked.

"For back or forth?"

"We want to go to the motel and later to Daniela's farm."

"Then the longer one."

They went through the park. Javier did not immediately explain the decision. At the southern exit he pointed to a construction site that left a narrow passage. From the north one could see through. From the south a corrugated sheet wall covered the oncoming traffic.

"The short way is open," he said. "I can't get back with boxes or passengers there reliably."

"They plan to get back on the way."

"When I have to go back."

Mara did not stop both ways in two days, as Alberto might have done. She went both directions today. The longer way took three minutes more. The short way back ended in front of a van that blocked the passage.

Javier asked the driver how long he was standing there. The man shrugged his shoulders. He delivered tiles until they were unloaded. There was no official lock. A road map would therefore have continued to show the passage as open.

Javier took a narrow side path between a pharmacy and a wall. After twenty meters he ended up on three steps.

"It's walking," Mara said.

"With a box maybe. Not with a wheelchair. Not with the mototaxi at all."

Teresa not only noted the way and time, but also the way of transport. The reliable way back was not Javier's personal instinct, but a decision from vehicle, cargo, view and turning point.

At the park, Javier showed them a place where he never diagonally crossed the lawn at night, although it was shorter. Under the leaves were raised paving stones and an open cable channel.

"When the lamps go back, you see that," Mara said.

"When the lamp comes from the right side, Javier said."

The remark led directly to a note for the planned test operation. Lighting should not only create surface. It had to make visible the actual danger.

"Observation: View and width of passage from both directions," Teresa said.

"Possible effect: detour or mooring," Mara said.

"Safety limit: no passage without turning, Javier said."

"Decision: Choose the way to a reliable return journey."

Javier nodded. "Not always the longer. Tomorrow the car can be gone."

At the Motel El Recodo the TV ran again without sound. Néstor had closed all windows on the first floor, except one in the hallway. Room 8 remained uninhabited.

"They air Thursdays," Mara said.

"Sometimes."

"Today is Thursday."

Néstor smelled into the hallway, not demonstratively. He opened room 8 with a key that he took from a separate drawer. Mara and Teresa stayed at the door.

The room resembled room 7. Bed, chair, closet without door. It smelled of cold dust, cleaning agents and weak humidity. On the bed there was no dust. The window was closed.

Néstor opened it only one gap, then opened the bathroom door and waited.

Mara asked him to show the decision for two other rooms. Room 6 had been occupied the previous evening. It smelled of soap and warm plastic. Néstor opened there windows and doors further because the outside air pulled into the hallway and no diesel came from the grifo. Room 4 was on the back. The wall humidity was lower, but the cabinet smelled muffig. Néstor pulled it off the wall before he ventilated.

“Same Thursday,” Teresa said. “Three different actions.”

“Three rooms,” said Néstor.

Mara checked his humidity meters against her own. One of them clearly deviated. Néstor had used the value of this device as a reason to ventilate room 5 longer last month.

“Then the number was wrong,” he said.

“Probably too high. Has the longer ventilation done any harm?”

“Just more dust.”

They marked the device and took it out of use. Mara's fieldsheet got a new question: How does the person responsible recognize that their observation itself is unreliable?

Néstor looked at the line. “If a room always has the same number.”

“That would be a clue.”

“No Thursday.”

“No.”

“Why not all of it?”

“The air comes from the Grifo today.”

“And?”

“Diesel. When I open all the way, the room smells worse than before.”

He held a small humidity meter on the wall and window frames. The values were raised but not critical. Néstor also checked the smell in the bathroom and the occupancy of the neighboring rooms.

“When room 7 is occupied, I open less long, he said. ”“When the air comes out of the room into the hallway, longer. When it goes out of the hallway, not.”

“Why Thursday?”

“Because someone wanted to write a day in the old paper.”

“Is the day useful?”

“To remember. Not to decide.”

Mara noted the smell direction, relative humidity, outside air and neighboring occupancy. Safety limit were visible mold, electric humidity and no occupancy of room 8. Néstor closed the window after seven minutes. Not after a fixed duration, but when the smell from the bathroom became weaker and diesel from the grifo stronger.

“You could use the same device in every room,” Mara said.

“I do.”

“And the same limits?”

“For mold yes. For air no.”

Teresa wrote: common risk, local decision.

Daniela's farm was behind a low house on the edge of the Centro. On the floor there were a table, four chairs, two planters and a clothes rack. Nothing seemed chaotic. Only the distances were not exactly equal.

Daniela took a broom and swept dust from the door to the drain. After a few moves she changed direction. She pushed the dust sideways under the table and left a narrow strip untouched.

“Why?” Mara asked.

“Because the direct way becomes too clear.”

“For the dust?”

“For me.”

Mara was waiting.

Daniela explained that she had swept the yard in straight lines and placed all the objects on the walls. After that, the free line from the door to the back gate had worked longer than the courtyard was. Since then, it has varied in order without neglecting escape route, flow or hygiene.

"Does this have a measurable effect today?"

"The process remains free. The dust is coming away. The rest is the reason why I don't always start right away."

"If someone copies your sequence?"

"Then tomorrow it will be an order."

Mara looked at the narrow strip. "So is the rule to make it different?"

"No. That would be a rule again."

Daniela put a chair back by a few centimeters to keep the way to the process wide enough. "The boundaries are established. In between I decide."

Mara asked Daniela to sweep the yard a second time as if it were the next day. Daniela started on the back wall, placed the clothes rack closer to the door and left the table unchanged. The process remained free. The narrow path was created in another place.

"If you deliberately change three things?" Mara asked.

"Then they count on the fourth day."

"If you roll a dice?"

"Then the cube, not the yard, decides."

Daniela paused and pointed to a wet spot under a planter. She placed the pot on two flat stones so that air came under it. This change would keep it until the ground was dry.

"Variation does not mean that nothing can remain," Mara said.

"No. Only that staying needs a reason."

Teresa did not write the sentence down as a rule. She noted the concrete trigger: visible moisture under the vessel. Possible effect: mold and damaged plaster. Limit: dry the ground, drain free. Decision: increase the vessel and later re-examine it.

Daniela's neighbor came through the gate and asked why three people were watching a flower pot. Daniela said they were testing moisture. The neighbor recommended that salt be sprinkled under the pot. That always helped.

Mara asked, where. Against humidity, ants and bad air, said the woman. Three effects on the same reason were not a good start. They rejected the salt because it could damage soil and pot.

She showed Mara a habit: before the sweep, a cup of water was placed at the door. It was said that this left less dust in the yard. Mara had Daniela sweep two comparable surfaces, one with a cup, one without. There was no discernible difference.

"Then we let the cup go," Mara said.

Daniela picked her up. "My mother will put her back tomorrow."

"Then we do not write that it works."

"That's enough."

In the evening Mara and Teresa sat in the small office of Archivo. The fieldsheet was full of corrections. Of twelve habits first noted, five remained as usable decision-making situations. Three were normal safety rules. Two showed no noticeable effect. Two were risky and had to be changed.

Alberto came in, looked at the leaves and asked for the rule column. Mara instead showed him the questions. He read them slowly.

"How should a representative work with it?"

"It needs the observations, limits and permissible areas."

"And if she decides differently than Manuel?"

"Then the decision must be within the safe area and justified."

"This is harder to test than a position."

"Yes," Mara said. "But a false firm position is easy to test and yet wrong."

Alberto took Manuel's fieldsheet. "I can make a form out of it."

"Not yet," said Teresa and Mara at the same time.

They looked at each other. Alberto put the paper back. "Then tomorrow."

Mara didn't draw a list of general rules from it. She wrote questions instead:

Before holding on to the questions, she asked each person to name a situation in which her own practice did not work. Manuel told of a morning when he had raised the pressure too carefully and an

upper house remained empty. Maritza once put the car closer to the wall because of wind; there the heat was stifling, and two containers were spoiling. Javier had fallen into a construction site on his familiar way back, which had not been there the previous day.

Néstor was silent the longest. Then he said that he had kept room 6 closed during a Garúa night because the wind was pushing rain under the window. In the morning it smelled like moisture. “Fluting was right,” he said. “Only not that night.”

Daniela reported on a court game where they had the children themselves decided where they were running. Two chose the area behind the kitchen because there was shade. There was a gas bottle in storage. Since then, she did not mark the whole way, but always the boundaries that children could not see.

Mara issued three cards for each story: trigger, safe limit, decision. Manuel's example was not a fixed time, but the measured pressure and the report of the upper house. The safe limit was an area that he did not exceed. The officer was allowed to decide, but had to report the change.

“It looks like a rule,” Alberto said.

“It's a,” Mara said. “Only none who pretends to be the same every morning.”

They tried the cards with swapped examples. Maritza's wind rule did not help Néstor with the window. Javier's construction site route said nothing about pressure. The structure remained usable, the concrete action was not. Exactly this difference should become important later.

Teresa suggested that you also keep track of who was affected by a decision. The tank was the top end of the house. At the park path older visitors and children. At the motel guests, but also the cleaning staff who opened the room in the morning. Responsibility did not begin at the device.

What observation triggers a change?

Which border is independent of the place?

What area is permitted?

Who decides and who represents this person?

Teresa read the four questions. “Less rules than this morning.”

“Yes.”

“Better?”

Mara put Manuel's pressure corridor, Maritza's car stand, Javier's way back, Néstor's ventilation and Daniela's yard side by side. “Better questions.”

Chapter 8: Four Out of Six

The Park Committee brought with it six number plates and four light bulbs. The signs were new, the light bulbs not. One came from the community hall, two from a camp and one from a packaging on which another model was depicted.

Alberto put the signs in order on a bench. P-01 to P-06.

"All six are in the inventory," he said.

"Even if only four run?" asked a woman from the committee.

"Just then."

Teresa had found the old procurement numbers. Two lanterns still wore faded stickers, three only adhesive remains, one nothing at all. She assigned each one a location, a photo and the previous condition.

Manuel and an electrician named Luis tested the masts. They did not start with the lights, but with the connecting boxes, grounding and line paths. The park remained closed as long as open cables were accessible.

Luis produced the same test sequence on each mast: visual control, tension freedom, ladder assignment, isolation measurement, grounding. Alberto read the number, Teresa compared the old location, and Manuel opened only the covers he knew of.

At P-01 a screw had been replaced by a wire. The wire held, but could not close the cover against moisture. Luis replaced it and put the old piece in a labeled bag.

"Why keep it?" asked a committee member.

"Because it explains why water was in the box," Teresa said.

"It was dry."

"Today."

P-02 had two cables, although the plan showed only one. The second ended isolated in the mast. Luis tested it and left it separate. P-03 at the well led voltage up to an old distributor, but not sure further. P-04 was technically best received. P-05 had no fixed supply line anymore. At P-06 the line was connected to P-03, contrary to the current switching sketch.

"If we just write in a working and not working way, we lose the reasons," Alberto said.

He expanded the inventory by condition, blocking ground and next measure. Teresa added source of the assignment. For the first time Alberto did not complain about another column.

The chairman of the Park Committee wanted to continue with an extension of P-06. Luis refused. A missing glass ball, open cable ends and unclear mast connection were not a question of light angle.

"Then the entrance from the road looks incomplete, said the chairman."

"It's incomplete," Teresa said. "You can see that."

The woman next to him nodded. "Dear two visible tasks as an invisible danger."

The lantern P-01 was located on the northern edge of the road. Its line was old, but continuous and sufficiently insulated. P-02 next to the benches had a new connection box. P-03 at the well was powerless and remained it. P-04 illuminated the southern entrance. P-05 and P-06 were located on a common old line whose separation in the switchbox was not clear.

"Four," Luis said after the test. "One, two, four and maybe five."

"Maybe it's not release," Manuel said.

They checked P-05 a second time. The isolation value was acceptable, but the line disappeared under the park and reappeared at the well area. P-06 could not be switched separately.

"Then not for the test operation," said Manuel.

The woman from the committee looked at the dark masts. "The feast is in four days."

The festival was intended to celebrate the official reopening of the renewed Parque Cívico. During the work, individual paths and seating areas had been temporarily accessible. Now, lighting, fountains and event spaces were to be released for regular public use.

"We'll continue to examine until then," Alberto said. "Today four go."

"What four?"

P-03 at the well fell away for security reasons. P-06 due to the common line. P-05 could be checked later with a separate, above ground guided and secured feed. For the first evening they chose P-01, P-02, P-04 and P-05 with temporary line.

The decision was not only on a list. Alberto hung a visible sign on every dark mast: tested - not yet in operation. The two open works should not look like forgotten lanterns.

At about six o'clock the park was reopened. The sun had disappeared behind the houses, but the sky remained bright enough for the first settings.

Before switching on, all of the park was left behind by the light. The committee marked places where there had been complaints in recent years: raised stones, the bench behind the wide tree, the southern entrance and the diagonal path. Two members also called the fountain, although no one should go there at night.

Mara was not involved in the test; she worked on the water samples. Teresa still used the field leaf from the previous day. Observation, effect, limit, decision. The shape also fit without Mara.

The limit was clear at the well: no pump operation, no open shaft, no light as an invitation to the closed area. The committee set up a low visible barrier. P-03 remained dark.

At the southern entrance, the problem was not a technical defect but glare. Luis explained that more brightness did not automatically make the transition from the dark road safer. The eyes needed a legible path, not a white spot.

Daniela walked through the entrance with an empty bucket, then with a shopping bag and finally at the hand of a child. The angle of light that was sufficient for her alone was too high with the child. Luis lowered him by a small step.

"Now?" he asked.

The child pointed to the threshold. "It's broken."

"Then you see them," Daniela said.

Manuel switched on P-01. Her light fell on the way and made the raised paving stones appear flat. Daniela went from the entrance to the bench and back.

"You can see the edge better from the side," she said.

Luis loosened the head of the lamp and turned it a few degrees. Now every stone raised cast a short shadow. The path seemed more uneven, but safer.

"Beautiful is different," said a man from the committee.

"Stoppers too," Daniela said.

P-02 illuminated the benches. In the first position, the light hit the seats but left the area behind dark. An elderly resident sat down and explained that when she stood up, she had to see where the stick was standing. Luis lowered the angle.

P-04 at the southern entrance blinded people who came out of the dark road. Manuel did not just straighten them down. Then the threshold would have become invisible. He turned them sideways until entrance and first path were recognizable.

P-05 ran over a tested cable that was led across the ground in a flat protective bridge. Two members of the committee placed benches in front of it so that no one went directly over it. Daniela had them removed the benches again.

"Then you see the bridge too late."

They marked the transitions and led the cable at the edge. The area remained free.

Alberto was standing on the switchbox and wanted to enter turn-on times.

"Everyone at 18:12, he said."

"P-05 only at 18:19", Luis said. "We connected the cable afterwards."

Alberto changed time. "From tomorrow together?"

"Why?" Teresa asked.

"To make the test operation comparable."

Manuel pointed to P-01. "You need it when the edge path gets dark. P-02 only when someone sits at the benches."

"This is not planable."

"Yes. Just not the same time."

They determined a responsibility and purpose for each lantern. P-01: edge path and raised patch, switch on early. P-02: benches and floor area, as required until the end of use. P-04: south entrance, from dusk. P-05: cross path, only during supervised trial operation.

The committee did not simply appoint four people, but also representatives. The chairman took over P-01. A shopkeeper on the northern edge could represent them and saw the way from his door. P-02 received two residents who regularly used the benches. P-04 was with the man who closed the community hall in the evening. P-05 remained with Manuel or Luis as long as the provisional management was necessary.

"If no one is responsible, she will remain out," Luis said.

"And if there is anyone, but has not tested the way?" Daniela asked.

"Then so too."

Alberto not only wrote names, but also the prerequisite for this. Visual inspection before switching on. Abort with damaged cover, humidity or unprotected cable. The cards looked less elegant, but they were usable.

One resident asked why P-02 could be switched on later than P-01. Electricity is electricity.

"The purpose begins later," Teresa said. "The bank does not need light if no one is sitting there. The edge path is used before."

"What if someone sits on the bench early?"

"Then the person responsible will activate after examination."

The resident took the card and read it. "So not after clock."

"Not only."

All four states came into the inventory. P-03 and P-06 also, with lock reason and next check.

When it got darker, Daniela and three members of the committee ran their way. Alberto stayed at the switchbox first. Teresa sent him along.

"The inventory number doesn't see the floor," she said.

On the northern edge, the path was easy to read. Between P-01 and P-02, however, there was a dark spot that appeared on the plan as an uncritical lawn area. People cut off diagonally there because the official route made a bow. At the edge, a root protruded from the ground.

"Another lamp?" asked Alberto.

"No," Daniela said. "First turn P-02."

Luis only changed the angle of P-02. The bench remained illuminated, and the diagonal path got enough scattered light to make the root visible.

"This means we lose brightness on the seat," Alberto said.

The elderly resident sat down again. "I can see the stick."

That was enough for the test operation.

Children came with a ball. At first they stopped at the entrance as if they were expecting to be sent back. A member of the committee showed them the edge path. They ran one round, then another. Nobody stumbled over the raised stones.

A salesman pushed his car to the southern entrance. He had stood there earlier because more people passed outside the park. Now he blocked the line of sight from P-04.

Daniela asked him to go two meters to the edge. He protested that there was less light there. Manuel did not turn a lantern for the car. The committee offered him a place near P-05, outside the cableway. From there he saw the cross road and the customers saw him.

People gradually stopped walking around the park. They took the northern path, stayed at the benches or came from the Mercado through the southern entrance. The park was not completely bright. Between the light areas remained shadows. But each illuminated place had a recognizable purpose.

A mother sat down on P-02's bench and let her child ride the sidewalk by bicycle. Before, she had waited beside the road because she could not overlook the dark park. Now she could see start and return, not every meter in between. That was enough for her.

Two young people stood under P-04. The light fell sideways and made their faces not very well visible, but it kept the entrance free. As the seller pushed his car closer, they helped him to lift the wheels over an edge.

On the diagonal path, a man almost stumbled over the root, but caught himself. The committee checked the angle again. The root was visible when you came from the edge of the road, not when you shortened from the bench. Luis turned P-02 by a few degrees further. After that, the bank, stick area and root were simultaneously recognizable, each less bright than before.

"The measuring instrument shows less lux there," Alberto said.

"People show less tripping there," Daniela said.

Luis measured again and confirmed that the minimum lighting was maintained at the way. The change was not against the measurement, but within the safe area.

An older man brought a small folding table and sat down to the edge to play Domino. The light was not enough for the stones. He placed the table closer to P-02 without blocking the way. No one changed the lamp for it. Not every use had to be optimized by infrastructure.

Later Efraín passed by, and he stopped at the northern entrance and looked at the four light areas.

"It used to be brighter," someone said.

"In the past, much was brighter when you haven't seen it for a long time," Efraín said, seated yourself with the dominoes.

Alberto once again dropped all six masts. The lock shield was attached to P-03. P-06 was captured, although the glass ball was missing. He photographed both in the dark and noted that missing operation meant no missing stock.

"Happy?" Teresa asked.

"Four work."

"Six are documented."

"That too."

"You sound disappointed."

"I would like six working and documented."

"This is still the order."

Four small cards, one per operated lantern, were placed on the switchbox. This was the purpose, switching time, visual inspection, responsibility and ground for demolition. The cards were not filled out immediately. P-05 also required cable control. P-02 called the seat and the diagonal path. P-01 referred to the pavement edge.

A member of the committee asked if they could not make a single sheet.

"Later maybe," Alberto said.

Teresa looked at him.

"A sheet of six different lines, he added."

Manuel P-05 switched off at eight o'clock. The supervised cable operation ended. The crossroad became darker, but did not remain unreadable. Most people used the edgeway in the meantime.

Luis separated the provisional line, checked it for heat and rolled it up. Alberto noted the operating time and condition after shutting down. No fault, no damaged protection bridge. P-05 had passed the test operation but remained subject to supervision until a permanent solution.

On the second evening, the use changed. A group of teenagers did not sit under P-02 but to the edge at the dark P-03 because there was no interference with music from a phone. Two older women took the illuminated bench for it. The committee noted the shift not as a problem but as an effect of lighting.

Daniela went off the paths with three children. One was small enough that the shrubs from his height covered the cone of light of P-04. Manuel knelt down and saw the same way. From an adult's perspective he was open; at child's height a dark strip lay between the bench and exit. They did not move a mast. The gardener tied two branches back without cutting them, and tested the way again.

At P-01, a resident reported glare in the bedroom. The lantern was technically correctly aligned. Nevertheless, light fell over the wall. Luis mounted a temporary shield that did not darken the path. Mara measured before and after at three points. The difference on the walkway remained within the intended area; at the window, the direct brightness decreased significantly.

"Is that in the error log?" Luis asked.

"Into the operating protocol," Mara said. "The lantern was not defective, but the effect was still wrong."

On the third evening, P-02 stayed out earlier because no one was sitting on the benches. Half an hour later, two people came from the community hall. The chairman turned them back in and entered reason and time. It cost less than a minute. The entry was longer than the action.

After a week, there were seven switching lists. None was identical. Nevertheless, patterns could be identified: P-04 almost always marked the entrance; P-01 needed the shielding; P-02 depended on the benches; P-05 worked but required a visual inspection of the line every day. P-03 and P-06 remained open tasks with name and appointment.

The committee decided not to combine the lists into an average night. An average would have created a mode of operation that had not taken place on any evening.

At P-01, the committee found a new dark spot on the patch. It was just water from a bottle, not moisture from the ground. The chairman wiped it away so that the edge would be visible again. Nor did a working light save any care.

P-02 was shut down at nine when the older residents left. P-04 remained until the closing of the municipal hall. The lanterns did not follow the same clock, but every shutdown was registered.

P-01 remained. P-02 also because three elderly residents sat on the benches. P-04 marked the entrance.

The committee sat down without driving the park visitors away. It decided to test the four lanterns for a week in exactly these different conditions. Every evening, paths and visibility were to be examined. P-03 and P-06 remained visible open work.

“Just leave it that way,” said the chairman.

“With changes when a danger appears,” said Manuel.

“Then just as it remains safe.”

Children were still running for a round. The older inhabitants stayed on the benches. A couple walked through the park instead of along the wall. No one was waiting for the two dark lanterns to recognize the evening as a success.

Chapter 9: The Closed Valve

In the morning after the test operation, moisture was in the well basin. No puddles, no visible flow. Only a dark channel at the inner edge, as if water had stood there shortly before and had expired again.

Manuel put his toolbox on a dry bench. P-01 and P-04 were switched off. P-02 had the last user shut down at nine o'clock. P-05 was separated and the provisional cable was rolled up.

The well should have been dry. The pump was powerless, the supply line closed and the flow open.

The fountain consisted of a flat round basin and a low column, from which three nozzles had previously come. Two were closed with metal caps. The third was carrying a piece of hose that Manuel had removed months ago. In the basin there were sand, three leaves and one coin.

Manuel swept away nothing. He photographed the condition, put small numbers next to the leaf, coin and damp channel and drew her location. Not because things had to be important, but because a later change was not confused with the cause.

The moisture did not start at a nozzle. It was located at the lower side of the basin, near the drain. Manuel checked the flow with a thin rod. It was free. Under the grid there was no water.

On the outside, the concrete was dry. A leaky supply could have created a dark spot there. The joint to the plaster also remained bright.

"Perhaps cleaning," Alberto said later.

"The committee did not clean the basin," Manuel said.

"Someone else?"

"Then the sand would have traces."

The dry leaves were unaltered. Someone could have carefully poured water into it without moving it. But there was no clue and no reason for that.

Manuel first checked the switch box. No power. Then he put his hand on the pipe under the basin. Cool, but without any visible vibration.

Mara came with Alberto shortly after seven. She wore sample set, pressure gauge and the field leaf from chapter 7. Alberto had the current park plan in a role.

"Did it rain?" he asked.

"No," said Manuel.

"Garúa?"

"On the benches yes. Not enough for the pool."

Mara measured the surface temperature. The damp channel was cooler than the dry basin centre. She smelled of a sterile swab after absorbing water. No chlorine odour, no rot.

"Show transmission."

Manuel led them to a low shaft behind the well. The lid was heavy and glued with sand. They checked the air before they opened it. The values were inconspicuous. In the shaft there were two valves. The larger one to the well was closed and secured with a wire mark.

Mara photographed the position. "Since when closed?"

"Tested before the test operation."

"Can it pass?"

"Can any valve."

They put a pressure gauge behind the slider. No measurable pressure. Manuel opened the emptying point. A few drops came, then nothing.

Mara left the emptying point open and observed the pelvis. If the valve passed, the pressure or at least the drop sequence would have to change. For fifteen minutes nothing came. The damp channel remained.

They then tested the pump electrically. Safe, disconnecter open, cable without voltage. Manuel turned the pump shaft by hand. It moved heavily but free. No water was pumped.

"Can anyone have turned it on at night?" Alberto asked.

"Only when the wire stamp was replaced at the switch," Manuel said.

The brand was intact and old dusty. Mara photographed it. A secret turn-on was not impossible, but had to bypass several visible fuses. She did not note any suspected person.

Next, Mara put dry absorbent strips on the three nozzles, the pipe joint and the pool edge. After twenty minutes, only the strip in the existing channel was wet. No water came out of the column.

Alberto crossed through the pump and nozzles on his plan as a cause.

"Not final," Mara said. "Under today's conditions, not confirmed."

He replaced the lines with small open circles. "You and Teresa have the same effect on plans."

"Which?"

"Nothing can die."

"Causes can die if we have tested them sufficiently. Today we have only one condition."

"Pump?"

"Stromless."

Alberto looked at the pool. "Then the moisture is old."

Mara dashed through the channel with a clean rod. The water film closed again. "It's up to date."

Under a second cover they found the old distributor. On the current plan there was only DISCOVERED. The distributor was not removed. Three lines went off: one to the well, one probably to the previous irrigation network and a narrower one that disappeared under a concrete slab.

The cover carried an old inventory number inside. Alberto found it in no current list. Teresa answered his call from the Archivo and searched in a handwritten register. After ten minutes she read an entry: DISTRIBUTOR PARK SÜD, translated from Depósito stock, remaining open.

"Imposed where?" asked Alberto.

"It doesn't say that there."

"Stay open while we stand before it."

"Then the whereabouts are now partially clarified. Not the lines."

Mara had the inventory number included in the current park stock. The distributor was available materially. His status DEPARTMENT was not deleted, but marked as earlier false information.

Manuel cleaned only as much dust from the pipes as was necessary for material and connection. On the narrow finish he recognized two different couplings. The older one was made of metal, later made of blue plastic. The transition could be part of a repair.

"Blue like the pipes in the Seco Canal," Alberto said.

"Blue like many water pipes," Mara said. "Compare material, not color."

It measured diameter and manufacturer embossing. The Canal-Seco piece had no visible embossing. A connection remained possible, not occupied.

"The third one is missing," Alberto said, rolling out the plan on the bank.

Manuel put a finger on the pipe. "Old."

"How old?"

"Other clutch. In front of the last parking line."

The narrow line was separated with a valve. The hand wheel could not be moved. Rust was on the spindle, but at one side there was an edge blunter than the rest.

Mara left it closed. "No force before we know progress and condition."

Alberto looked for the old plans. One showed an irrigation network with two drains. A second led a line towards Depósito Norte. The plan of La Hondonada showed on the northern edge a strand that could have started about below the park. No line fit exactly to the pipe angle.

"Three possibilities", Mara said. "Old park network. Depósito Norte. Southern inventory."

"What do we mark?" Alberto asked.

"All."

He had three pens. Blue for park, green for Depósito, yellow for the southern course. The lines ran side by side and separated where the plans no longer had any points of reference.

Alberto put transparent paper over the three plans. The old park plan had a different scale than the management plan. He enlarged a copy until the walls of the municipal hall were stacked together. After that, the fountain, but not the southern entrance, fit.

"The park has changed," Manuel said. "The path was relegated to the tree."

"What tree?"

Manuel pointed to the broad trunk next to P-02. On an old aerial picture he was smaller and the path straight. Today's path was about the roots. Wires could follow the old geometry, while paths were later shifted.

Mara therefore did not draw a line along the present patch. She marked possible corridors with width, not thin exact lines.

"That looks even more messy," Alberto said.

"It shows where we can look without pretending that we know."

They set three above ground measuring points along the corridors. An acoustic positioning device found a clear signal on the western course from the well-known irrigation line. In the northern corridor there was a weak metallic echo. In the southern area, cables and concrete remains overlaid every clear location.

Manuel didn't hit a probe rod in the ground. The park was full of unknown lines. Every invasive test needed clearance.

"This looks messy."

"It's a well-separated uncertainty."

Manuel did not set a chalk mark on the cover. The position of the valve was visible. A new line could have acted as a target position later.

They took a sample from the wet channel. The amount was sufficient for a microbiological rapid test and conductivity, not for a complete analysis of origin. Rest chlorine was hardly detectable. This could mean old tap water, condensate, basic moisture or a mixture.

"No chlorine does not come from the pipeline," Alberto said.

"No measurable residual chlorine means just that," Mara said.

The rapid test remained unobtrusive. No increased opacity, no immediate microbiological indication.

Mara also measured conductivity and temperature. The values were similar to the water in the parkline, but were not close enough to confirm a source. Evaporation in the shallow basin could increase conductivity. Humidity from concrete could absorb minerals.

She took a control sample from the closed well. Manuel disinfected a test connection, drained residual water and opened only the small sample tap. The control sample was cooler and contained measurable residual chlorine. The pool sample did not.

"So not out of line," Alberto said.

"Not fresh from this line under these conditions," Mara said.

"How many words does a no need?"

"So many until it's true."

Alberto wrote down the comparative values completely. He left the word no.

Alberto wrote in his draft: Water hygienically safe.

Mara stroked it. "This sample does not show any current microbiological clue. That's all."

"It's the same for visiting the park."

"No, we do not know the source, and men should not drink it."

They put a sign at the well: no drinking water, no tanks entered. The park remained open.

Behind the old distributor was a lower shaft. When Manuel raised the lid only a few centimeters, the gas meter showed sinking oxygen. It immediately closed.

"It's locked," Mara said.

Alberto looked over the park. "The whole area?"

"The shaft. Locking so far that no one opens the lid. Not the edge path, not the benches."

"What if the line leads underneath to the well?"

"Then it doesn't change the safe distance."

Manuel put a solid barrier around the lid. No tape that children could lift. The way around the barrier remained wide enough.

The park committee came to the morning check. The chairman looked at the channel in the pool and asked if the trial operation would be stopped.

The two residents of P-02 and the shopkeeper who was to represent P-01 came with her. They first checked their lanterns. No water in the connecting boxes, no damaged cover, no moved lamp. The test operation itself had not caused any visible disturbance.

The shopkeeper wanted to extend the barrier around the deep shaft to the well. Then the diagonal path would have been closed.

"Where is the danger?" Mara asked.

He pointed to the shaft.

"Then we lock the access to the lid and the area that would be affected by the break-in. The path remains clear as long as its edge is stable."

They went away together. Manuel checked the ground with the staff. The barrier was enlarged by half a meter but not pulled to the path.

"When we close everything around a danger, we don't learn anything about their actual border," Mara said.

The chairman wrote the checkpoint on the map of P-02: View of barrier, not entering, report damage. The lantern's responsibility thus got more observation without becoming shaft maintenance.

"The four lanterns worked safely," Mara said. "The well remains closed. An additional shaft is locked."

"Is the water dangerous?"

"We have no acute clue in this sample. The source is unexplained. Therefore, no contact and no use."

The chairman repeated the sentence until he fit it. "No current clue, source open, well closed."

"Exactly."

P-01 was continued in the evening. The barrier lay outside of their path. P-02 illuminated the bench, not the well. P-04 and P-05 were not affected.

Manuel checked the moisture film every thirty minutes. He did not take chalk to trace the edge. Instead, he photographed from the same position with a small scale in the picture.

"Why no line?" Alberto asked.

"When it continues tomorrow, someone sees the chalk and thinks it belongs there."

"Photo and scale are also a line."

"But one that remains yesterday."

Mara did not write the sentence in the minutes, only the method.

They checked the ground with a line search device. From the old distributor, the narrow line could be tracked several meters. Then the signal lost under a zone of metal residues and cables. The possible course to the park network turned west. The possible Depósito history went north. The southern line remained between them until the signal disappeared.

Mara had a small change in pressure in the well-known parkline while the tracking device was running. Only the western corridor responded. The narrow old line did not show any measurable change. It could be separated, empty or connected to another network.

Manuel heard a short click on the pipe when the pressure was taken back. It came from the direction of the old valve. He repeated the change. The click did not come back.

"Notes?" Alberto asked.

"Yes," Mara said. "Once acoustically perceived by Manuel, not confirmed at replay."

Alberto wrote the sentence without comment. The field day from chapter 7 had also changed his language.

To test condensate, Mara placed a dry metal piece next to the basin and one in the shade of the fountain column. After an hour, none was wet. The humidity was too low to explain the water film alone. Also this possibility became smaller, not impossible for the night.

"The device doesn't decide," Alberto said.

"It is limited where we continue to check," Mara said.

They put three marks on the plan, none on the ground. A ground marking would have claimed a course they had not confirmed.

Around noon, the lab called for the first water samples from Los Pinos. No acute contamination in the previously evaluated samples. Mara asked for the same test of the well sample. She explained to Manuel that the hygienic warning for the drinking water network did not automatically apply to the unknown park source.

“Water is not the same water,” he said.

“Not without connection.”

In the afternoon, the sun dried the benches and paths. The damp channel remained at the well. It did not get wider, but also brighter. Manuel checked the closed valve again. No pressure behind it. The pump remained without current.

Mara had three control surfaces marked: one directly on the basin, one on similar patches in the shade and one in the sun. All were tested at the same time with identical cloths. The cloth on the basin took moisture, which in the shadow only dust that remained warm and dry in the sun. The method was rough, but it separated at least surface and impression.

Under the maintenance cover a closed cable pipe ran. Luis tested it without tension and opened only the accessible cap. There was no water in it. A second pipe led towards the old distributor, but was closed with mortar. They did not drill it up. A possible shortcut did not justify any intervention in unknown inventory.

The chairman brought a photo of the fountain's construction. The basin was not yet lying on it; gravel, two pipes and a worker were visible with a shovel. Teresa compared the angle of view to the trees. One of the pipes could be the current cable pipe. The other disappeared outside the later basin.

On the back was a date and the name of the photographer, but no name for the line. Mara asked for a digital copy and noted the origin. The original remained with the chairman.

Manuel only ran a pressure sample to the closed valve. The value held. Behind the valve the system remained untested because the well should have been filled for that. Mara wrote the limit boldly in the report. Close to the valve was not the same as dense well.

Shortly before the opening a child came with a cup and wanted to wipe the gutter dry. Daniela did not hold it back frightenedly, but explained that the spot was being watched. They stuck a low mark next to it, outside the running path. The humidity thus became not more dangerous, but visible as a work area.

Before closing the shaft, he checked the wire mark, valve and measuring connection. Everything stood as in the morning. He put on the lid and screwed it.

Alberto brought the updated cards to the switchbox. Three wide corridors instead of a line. A closed shaft. An old distributor as existing inventory. The sample with its limited result.

“That's more documentation than cause,” he said.

“Today, yes,” Mara said.

“And yet the park can open tonight.”

“Because we have limited the danger without inventing the uncertainty.”

Manuel went around the pool one last time. The coin, leaves and grains of sand were as in the morning. Only the damp edge had become darker, although the sun was higher.

The pool was still wet.

Chapter 10: The Old Channel

The supervision of the Cultural Authority was called Lucía Arce and carried a portfolio in a transparent shell. Before someone entered the Huaca Bajo La Arena, they had names, equipment and purpose of the visit entered.

“Observation and surveying in the exposed edge area,” she read from Mara’s application. “No sample, no probe, no displacement of material.”

“Right,” Mara said.

Lucía looked at Manuel. “No small repair.”

“I didn’t bring anything to repair old stones.”

He wore a measuring tape, water scale and a soft brush that Lucía immediately took from him.

“Neither clean.”

“Then only measuring tape.”

Teresa had copies of a modern dewatering file. Efraín waited at the gate. He knew the way to Huaca.

The Garúa was low above the complex. It made the exposed stones darker and the sand firmer. Behind the barrier stood low walls and platforms, partly under shelter roofs. The group remained on the marked path.

At the visitor point, a board with the known construction phases hung. Several data were marked “probably” or “not finally dated”. Someone had not printed the cautious words smaller than the safe ones.

Lucía explained that the channel had become visible during securing work years ago. It was documented, cleaned and not exposed after that. Some stones had since settled down. After a rare heavy rain, the team had to remove sand without changing its original location.

“Originally in which year?” asked Manuel.

“Originally in the sense of documented state when exposed. Not in the sense of the first building.”

“Then you also keep an intermediate position.”

“We preserve what we can prove.”

Mara saw the relationship to Manuel’s chalk strokes, but said nothing. An archaeological documentation and a valve setting had different tasks. Similar care did not make her the same system.

Before they went to the channel, Lucía showed them pictures of three earlier states. On the oldest one, the northern section was wider because two marginal stones were missing. Later, they were re-used according to findings. A southern overflow was not fully visible in any early photo.

“If we don’t see something today, it doesn’t mean it was never there,” Teresa said.

“And when we see it in a photo, we don’t know how long,” Lucía said.

Mara recorded the picture numbers in her protocol. She would treat no dimension as timeless.

The channel was located on the outer edge of an already documented structure. It was not deep. Two parallel rows of stones limited a floor made of smaller plates and compacted material. At first glance it seemed irregular: wide, narrow, again wide.

“Water pipe?” asked Manuel.

Lucía answered before Mara did. “As a gutter documented. Use not fully clarified.”

“Then we call it the Rinne,” Mara said.

It began at the permitted northern mark. Lucía showed exactly where the measuring tape could be placed. Mara measured width and visible slope without putting a rod in joints. Manuel held the tape above the surface.

Lucía had placed small reversible targets on the already documented points. Mara set up the leveling device outside the structure. Manuel held the bar on modern tread plates, not on the old stones. Each reading got an uncertainty because the surface was irregular.

The first difference in height was so small that Manuel thought it was a measurement error. Mara repeated the reading from a second position. The value remained the same within a few millimeters.

“Water flows with little gradients, she said. ”“When the surface and the crowd fit.”

“What if sand comes?”

“Then the effective sole changes.”

Lucía pointed to an old deposit line on the wall of the gutters. It was not parallel to the floor of today. Either the sole had changed or the water had stood differently at times. A single line could not separate both.

Mara drew it. No arrow for flow direction, only position and height.

The first section was thirty-one centimeters wide, the next forty-eight. In between there was a low overflow that could have led water to a flat hollow on the side. The edge was worn out and later supplemented with another stone.

The supplement was lighter and finer. Lucía explained that the repair was archaeologically documented but not dated exactly. It could come from a later historical use phase or from an early preservation before modern reports were kept.

"Then even the repair is old," Efraín said.

"Old enough that we don't know how old," said Lucía.

At the wide section lay flat stones like small steps. They could have slowed current, caught sand or simply compensated an irregular surface. Mara measured their heights. None formed an exactly repeated series.

Manuel pointed to two gaps. "If there were stones missing, the series would be more regular."

"Or the gaps are part of the form," Mara said.

Lucía had photos without the missing stones. They were not added just to make the pattern look more complete.

At the side trough a narrow outlet was found. It ended after less than one meter in solid sand. Whether it continued, could not be probed. Mara noted visible end, not actual end.

"Bugs?" asked Efraín.

"Change," Teresa said.

"Can be both," Mara said.

Lucía nodded. "We do not date the repair during a water visit."

The channel fell at first hardly measurable. Further south the slope became stronger, then flatter. A modern, straight line would not have been planned like this. For open water guidance with changing sand however, the width could influence overstatement and deposit.

Mara drew cross sections, not reconstruction. At one point a row of small stones sat loose enough that she could have walked at the next heavy rain. Lucía did not let her touch.

"When they move, you lose the course," Manuel said.

"If we put them now, we lose the condition," said Lucía.

The supervisor photographed the post for conservation control. A possible backup would be decided later, not during this inspection.

Efraín stood before a wide section. "There are gullies at El Faro that look like this."

"Same stones?" Mara asked.

"No. Same way to get wider where the sand comes."

"Joint Origin?"

"I didn't say that."

He only described what he had seen at low tide: flat channels in the walls, some connected, others not, repairs with other material. Teresa noted the similarity as a comparison, not as an assignment.

At the middle section there were two overflows at different heights. The lower one led to a valley, which was now filled with sand. The higher one ended at a later wall.

Mara did not calculate any historical flow rate. This was due to the lack of original roughness, water depth and complete flow. It could only show that the higher overflow would have been achieved only at a higher water level, provided both were open at the same time.

"So a security reserve," Teresa said.

"Possibly. Or a later conversion with another purpose."

Efraín went back a bit of the marked visitor path and looked at the channel from the opposite direction. "From here the higher one looks like the older one."

Lucía stood next to him. The joint between the overflow and the wall was actually different. She photographed her for a later structural-historical examination.

"They found something," Manuel said.

"We found a place to be examined more closely," Lucía said.

"This is the longer form of it."

"And the right one."

The Garúa collected on Manuel's measuring tape. It dried it before water dripped onto the structure. Even her examination was not allowed to produce the moisture they wanted to measure later.

"Maybe it was first relieved here and later there," Mara said.

"Or both for different quantities," Manuel said.

"Or one was never finished," Lucía said.

They left all three possibilities.

The Garúa became denser. Moisture lay on the surfaces, but not evenly. The compacted bottom of the channel remained lighter than some stones beside it. Mara measured only contactless temperature and surface moisture. Lucía had previously tested the device and approved the measuring points.

"The channel is not the wettest area," Mara said.

"She doesn't have to be," Lucía said. "She is open and gets wind."

Outside the channel was a dark sand spot. It was still within the visual zone, but beyond the permitted limit of measurement. Mara photographed it without approaching.

Teresa drew out the modern project file. It was from a drainage plan that had been started decades after the documented release. On one side it was said: Reference to existing derivative logic at the edge of Bajo La Arena. Among them a sketch with wide catch zones, lateral overflows and several possible drain paths.

The file contained a report from an engineer who had visited the channel. He did not write that it had to be copied. He highlighted three observed properties: no continuous cross-section, lateral relief and repair capability with available material. After that he warned that scale and precipitation levels of the modern plant were others.

"He was careful," Mara said.

"In the report," Teresa said. "The call for proposals was later shortened."

In the tender, "several possible drain paths" had become two fixed channels. In the construction change, a third overflow was added again after Sand had laid the first section.

Manuel leafed between report and change. "You only shortened the possibilities and later reduced one."

"A new one adds," Mara said. "Not the same, conditions were now known."

The modern facility was further north and was partly visible on aerial images. A wide collection area led around a road. The never-built third section was still dashed in the plan.

Teresa marked the report, the tender and the construction change as separate versions. The old channel had served as a reference to thinking. Her form had not been transferred one to one.

"They copied the old gutter," Manuel said.

"No," Teresa said, pointing to the dimensions. "The modern system is larger and is elsewhere. They have called the principle a reference."

The planning had never been fully implemented. Two sections appeared as built, one as moved. A later note pointed to wandering sand and a changed slope after roadwork.

Mara placed the sketch next to her cross-section. The similarity was not in a fixed form. Both designs allowed several paths for different quantities. Both assumed that sand and gradients did not remain the same forever.

"They didn't know what was going to happen," Alberto did not say, because he wasn't there. Teresa said nothing.

Mara put it more carefully. "The construction didn't have to know every condition that would happen later, leaving room for change."

Lucía looked at the channel. "And it was repaired anyway. Space for change does not mean that it works by itself."

"Exactly."

Manuel compared the idea with his valves. He did not say that the Huaca confirmed his practice. He pointed only to the changing widths.

"If there were thirty-one centimeters everywhere, sand would close everything in one place."

"Maybe," Mara said. "We don't know the quantities of that time."

"But we see the repairs."

"Yes."

The group went to the southern protection mark. There the channel was damaged. Two stones were missing, the floor was washed out and a modern cable protection went over it. The old structure had not survived every subsequent use.

A post of the shelter was located near the channel. Garúa's foundation led to a place that had been dry in early photos. Lucía had therefore installed a small modern drip edge. It was consciously visible and dated.

"Why not hide?" asked Manuel.

"So that no one will consider it part of the plant later."

The cable protection was also documented, but less well. Teresa found only one invoice in the file without a map. Lucía noted to follow the course.

Mara did not measure the damaged area as original width. She set two values: today's visible opening and reconstructable minimum width between preserved edges. The second value received a question mark.

"May a reading have a question mark?" asked Efraín.

"When it comes to an assumption, it must have one," Mara said.

The strongest humidity value within the permitted zone was not in the deepest section, but on a modern joint. This did not confirm any historical water flow. It only showed how strongly the current state determined the measurement.

Lucía finished the survey. "Until here. Further is not exposed and today no part of the application."

Mara did not set a last measuring point beyond the line. She only took the strongest visible moisture spot with position and photo. It was just outside the known channel, where no historical structure was documented under the sand.

"If we knew what was underneath it, Manuel said."

"Then we would need another proposal," Lucía said.

"And an archaeological reason," Mara said. "Not just our water question."

On the way back to the gate, Efraín pointed to a place where the Garúa dripped off on a sheltered roof. The sand underneath was darker than any old channel.

"Sometimes the new humidity is just off the new roof," he said.

Mara also recorded this in her record. Not every dark spot was a thing of the past.

In the administrative room, everyone signed the end of the visit. Lucía checked that no sample had been taken and no material moved. Teresa gave her a copy of the modern project file because the cultural authority had only an incomplete version there.

Lucía did not immediately put the copy in the inventory. She compared page numbers, attachments and stamps with her version. Two drawings were missing from her, but her portfolio contained a photo that Teresa didn't know.

The photo showed three men beside a brick section of the gutter. One held a latte with markings, another half stood outside the picture. In the background the Cerro Dormido was flatter to be seen than from its current location. Teresa did not turn the picture, although Alberto said it might have been stuck in the wrong way. Only the shadows and a wall opening confirmed the orientation.

Lucía knew the name of the youngest man. He had worked at the museum later and had died a few years ago. His daughter may have had notebooks. No one called her immediately. A family estate was not a freely available supplement to a government file.

Instead, they made a request: which documents were searched for, what copies were marked for and that originals did not have to be submitted. Lucía insisted that a rejection could also be noted without justification.

The cross sections of the channel were numbered on one drawing. Number four was missing, number five showed a widened area with lateral overflow. Mara put transparent paper over it and only transferred dimensions, not the idealized hatching. On site they had found no section that looked exactly like this.

“Maybe destroyed,” Alberto said.

“Maybe never built,” Teresa said.

Mara added: “Or later repaired differently.”

They searched for material quantities in the invoices. The cement supply was sufficient for several variants; no cross-section could be reconstructed from it. For this, the item adaptation to inventory appeared repeatedly. There was no detail about it, only the recognition that the plan had not decided alone.

In the afternoon they returned with Lucía to the protective limit. The archaeologists determined where they could stand. Mara did not measure in the Huaca and did not set a marker on old masonry. From a modern way she compared axes of sight and heights. The alleged overflow lay after the drawing under a later fence. Thus the test ended provisionally.

“A complete file of two incomplete,” said Manuel.

“Not yet,” Teresa said. “First, a list of differences.”

They agreed to replace digital copies with source. No one replaced the older folder with the thicker one.

Mara wrote as a technical conclusion: The channel shows customizable cross sections, overflows and repairs; function and dating remain partially unexplained. No direct technical connection to the current water network is proven.

The sentence was less beautiful than the gutter, and it was resilient.

“We both keep,” Lucía said.

“Of course,” Teresa said.

The strongest humidity in the morning remained outside the old channel and outside its measuring limit. Mara left it there.

Chapter 11: The Correct Setting

In the afternoon before the festival, the generator stood on the Grifo farm, between a pallet of mineral water and a pile of empty beverage boxes. It was yellow, heavy and often enough pushed at the edges to prevent anyone from re-emerging. On the tank, a faded sticker with the telephone number of a rental company from the provincial capital stuck.

At the official reopening, the Municipalidad expected more visitors than on an ordinary evening in the park. Nevertheless, the celebration was not allowed to be a reason to put untested facilities into operation. Everything that worked on this day had to remain within its safe limits even under full use. Javier had taken him in the morning, not the shortest way, he said, but the one where the loading area was the least jumping.

"These are two different things," Mara said.

"Only for people without shock absorbers."

Manuel knelt beside the frame and read the type plate. The performance was enough for the stage, the two speakers, the work lighting and a part of the parking lamps. It wasn't enough for everything that had been written on lists over the week.

Teresa held three such lists.

"The juicer is only on one," she said.

"Then she is democratically rejected," Javier said.

"It is electrically rejected."

Mara had made a load plan in the morning. The stage got its own circuit. The sales stands were to operate their small devices at the fixed supply on the western park edge, whose fuses Manuel had already checked. Two of the six lanterns would be supplied via separate, provisional lines, with fault current protection and cable bridges. Four had their own repaired connections. The generator should not take over surprises.

It was easy on paper.

When Manuel started it, the engine ran evenly for three seconds. Then a trembling wandered through the frame. The tank cover began to clap finely, the boxes next to it answered, and in the distribution box the protective circuit jumped out.

Manuel stopped the engine immediately.

"Once again?" Teresa asked.

"Only when we know what we saw the first time."

Mara noted: Start without load. Vibration increasing. Shut down after about nine seconds. No consumers switched on.

The owner of the Grifo, Don Esteban, came from the office and wore a white shirt.

"Yesterday he ran, he said."

"Where?" Mara asked.

"There's a back."

He pointed to a covered concrete area next to the washing machine.

"With load?"

"With two lamps and a fridge."

"How long?"

"One hour. Maybe more."

Manuel looked at the current location. The yard fell barely visibly to the drain grid. A wheel of the generator stood on a place where the concrete had been repaired.

"We're still checking it completely," he said.

Don Esteban nodded. "For this I gave him to you."

"They let us, said Teresa."

"That obliges me even more."

Manuel started with the oil. The stand was inside the marking, the color was inconspicuous, the closure was clean. He checked fuel line, air filters and battery connections. Mara photographed type plate, counter level and each test for the event file. Teresa compared the serial number to the rental license.

"That's the right one," she said.

"That's something already today," said Javier.

The ladder was present. The grounding cable was not damaged. Manuel measured the resistance of the intended connection and let Don Esteban show the ground spear that the Grifo had given. He was new and too short for the ground at the park if it was only struck up to half.

"Then all of it," said Manuel.

"That was the plan," Teresa said.

"Many plans end as soon as a hammer becomes heavy."

He put the spear to the cables, not to the generator. Mara understood the order: What was tested here remained separate from what had to be produced at the site.

The manual was in a plastic bag under the seat of the small transport trailer. It was oil-lubricated but complete at the edges. For operation it required a horizontal, solid surface, free ventilation and a fixed nominal speed. A drawing showed four equally loaded support points.

Javier looked under the chassis. "He has four. The floor has other plans."

Manuel pushed a thin metal gauge under the front right foot. She almost walked in to the middle.

"He's not standing just, he said."

"So little?" Teresa asked.

"For a water level little. For a running engine you have to measure."

They pushed the generator onto the older concrete behind the washing machine. There it stood without visible play. Manuel checked again that no consumer was connected. At the second start the frame remained quieter. The frequency indicator rose, exceeded the target area briefly and fell back. After half a minute the shaking began again, weaker than before, but clearly enough that the tank cover moved.

The protection circuit stayed in this time.

Manuel turned it off.

"So two mistakes?" asked Javier.

"Two conditions," Mara said. "Maybe a mistake."

Manuel wrote the values on a piece of cardboard, although Mara had already had them in the protocol. He liked numbers that remained within reach of the machine.

"The speed is too high," he said. "Not much. It can behave differently under load, but we don't attach anything until the idle values are right."

Don Esteban took his mechanic from the workshop. He was called Óscar and came with a cloth in his hand, which must have been red once. He listened to Manuel's report without interrupting it and checked the same points again. No one took that away from him.

"The controller was re-set after the last use," said Óscar. "For a pump."

"What load?" Manuel asked.

"One-phase, high inrun current. The engine was sucking off."

"And after that?"

"After that nobody used it for an event."

Teresa crossed the word reserve behind generator on her list. "Then today this is the decrease, not the sample."

Óscar put a rev indicator on the frame and ran the generator again. The value confirmed Manuel's observation. He released the fuse nut on the controller and made a small correction. The engine sounded lower, not quieter afterwards. The display remained in the permissible range.

The shaking was still there.

Óscar pushed the shoe slightly against the right side of the frame. The movement decreased.

"Lager?" Mara asked.

"Motor bearings look good," he said. "Frames may be warped, or rubber feet may be tough."

He turned off and checked them, three gave in under pressure, the left side barely.

"New?" asked Manuel.

"No," said Don Esteban. "He's probably the oldest."

Javier laughed once. "Finally something that gets harder with age."

Óscar measured the height of the feet. They were the same. He found no cracks, no loose screw and no spot that made an exchange mandatory before the feast. Nevertheless, the generator would not lie evenly on the solid surface in the park if its slope resembled the yard.

"We can get new vibration dampers," Teresa said.

"Today?" asked Don Esteban.

"If it has to be."

Óscar shook his head. "Not just use any rubber. If it is too soft, the whole thing moves more. If it cannot tolerate fuel, we will have a different shape tomorrow."

The shelf of the workshop contained old parts, labeled after vehicle and year. Óscar took out a flat black rubber pad that had formerly been under a stationary compressor pump. It was not torn, oil-resistant and large enough to distribute the load under a frame point.

"No repair on the device," he said. "Just balance on the floor, and only if we test it under load."

Mara photographed the embossing and wrote down material, strength and intended position. "If we use it, it comes into the construction plan."

Javier weighed the edition in his hand. "It becomes famous."

"She's numbered," Teresa said.

"That's almost the same thing in San Desvelo."

They put the support under the side with the hard foot, not directly under the foot, but wide under the frame. Manuel controlled the engine with the water scale longitudinally and crosswise. Óscar started the engine. The speed remained in safe range. The frame still vibrated, as every diesel engine of this size vibrated, but nothing wandered, nothing clattered and no cable moved at the terminals.

They first switched on a test load, then a second one. The voltage sank briefly and stabilized. Manuel measured both outputs. Mara noted the values, Teresa the time. After ten minutes a heater came from the workshop, which drew almost as much electricity as the sound system.

"Now about stage and work light, Manuel said."

"Without music," said Javier.

"This improves the measurement."

After twenty minutes the protection device did not shut down. The temperature on the housing remained in the expected range. Óscar checked whether the support had shifted. It was at the same place.

Mara once went around the current generator. From the west side the vibration was hardly visible. On the east side a fine ring in the dust showed that the frame had moved there before. The ring did not get bigger.

"We also test the shut-down," she said.

Manuel took down the loads in the order he had planned. Then he pressed the emergency off. The engine stopped immediately. When restarting after waiting time, the setting was retained.

Teresa looked at her watch. "We have time to find another one now."

"Yes, Mara said."

"Do we have to?"

Mara looked at Manuel and Óscar, not to leave them the decision, but because the clearance had several responsibilities.

"The device is technically usable," said Óscar. "With this adjustment, fixed level installation, documented compensation and load limit."

"And with grounding before the first launch," Manuel said. "Cable bridges, barrier, fire extinguishers."

"And one person who switches said Mara. "No multiple plugs of stands, no additional consumers. If the frequency runs out of the range or the frame wanders, it is shut down."

Teresa wrote the conditions individually. "Then I take him off."

Don Esteban signed the test sheet. Óscar signed for the setting. Manuel for the electrical test. Mara for load plan and operating conditions. No one signed for nothing to happen.

Javier brought the trailer forward. On his loading surface were already the heavy cable drums and two rows of folding chairs, separated with belts. The generator was not allowed to be transported loosely together with them. They lashed it at four points. The rubber pad came into a labeled box with water scale, underlay wedges and the laminated body plan.

"Don't put under the generator until it stands in its place," Mara said.

"I will resist the temptation to do leveling work while driving," Javier said.

Daniela came with six young people from the Cultural House. They were to bring the light chairs and two cartons of paper lanterns to the park. Instead of forming a straight row, they divided according to the size of the objects. Two took one box, three each four chairs, one carrying the rolls with a barrier tape.

"The list says: first chairs, then light, Teresa said."

Daniela looked at the group. "People say that both are right."

Teresa thought only briefly. "As long as the park is unloaded separately."

The youths walked at loose intervals. Nobody called a beat. Nevertheless, everything arrived.

Javier didn't drive through the center. On the southern edge of the city the track was longer, but the surface was more even and the market traffic thinner. Mara sat next to him, the test documents on his knees. Behind them Manuel followed on the motorcycle so that at every stronger movement someone could immediately see the construction.

"You need longer than usual today," Mara said.

"Today everything is to arrive as it has started."

"That would be a good goal for you too."

"Otherwise, people pay for speed."

At the park, Efraín and two workers of the community waited. The floor space for the generator was outside the paths, behind a low lattice and far enough from the sales stands. The concrete was fixed, but it fell to the rear edge. Manuel set up the water level. The bubble touched the marking.

"Less than at the Grifo, he said. "But the same direction."

They loaded the generator with ramps, put the lower legs and pushed it to the marked position. Only then Teresa took the black support out of the box. It fit under the intended frame side. The water scale was in the middle.

Efraín watched. "Is that the solution?"

"This is part of the lineup," Mara said.

"What's her name?"

"Gumming-up, number G one," Teresa said.

Efraín seemed a little disappointed. "You could have given her a better name."

"Then she might have had other tasks," Mara said.

Manuel completely smashed the ground spit and closed the area. He moved the main line to the distributor and measured it again. Only after that could be started. Meanwhile, the young people built up the chairs, not in perfectly straight rows, but in three slightly opened groups. Between them were wider paths than in the first plan.

Daniela stood on the small stage and checked the view. "That's how you see from the side."

"And you come out without getting a whole row up," Teresa said.

"Is that approved now?"

Teresa looked at the escape plan. The paths were not narrower, the exits free. "Now yes."

The generator ran for thirty minutes at the site sample. First only with stage lighting, then with speakers and working light. Manuel ran a recording of sea noises over the plant because it had a uniform level. The park filled with a Pacific that came from a cable.

Javier stood between the chairs. "The sea is on time today."

"It has a driver," Daniela said.

Mara controlled the voltage at the end of the longest line. It was in the designated range. Nothing wandered on the generator. The edition remained visible, flat and unspectacular under the frame.

When Manuel switched off the speakers, the real noise of the city remained: a bus on Avenida, a dealer with metal rods, pigeons under the roof of the park.

Luis had proposed a load test before the final test operation. Not all devices should run simultaneously, but in the order of the fixed program: first basic lighting, then two speakers, later coffee mill and cooling unit. Mara allowed enough time between the steps to stabilize temperature and voltage.

The voltage dropped briefly at the coffee mill. The value remained valid, but Efraín heard another engine noise. Luis repeated the stage, this time with another extension cable. The break-in was smaller. The first cable was not damaged, but longer and unfavorable for this stand. It got another insert and a colored band, no secret banishment into the storage room.

The coffee bean saleswoman insisted on connecting her own mill on the day of the festival. Manuel showed her the intended connection and the strain relief. She introduced it once, then he had her explain the order. An instruction was only useful if she did not consist of nods only.

Javier parked the van at the side gate for trial. In his first position he blocked the free strip for rescue personnel. He set back, although all boxes were already cheaper to the door. The second position made the way from the car longer but kept the access free. Daniela marked the border with two removable bands.

When a speaker stand slightly fluctuated, a helper wanted to lay under it a piece of the same rubber pad that had stabilized the generator. Mara stopped it. The generator dampened the material on a flat surface; under a narrow foot it would have reduced the padding. Luis brought a suitable solid plate. A good solution was not a material with general virtue.

"The attitude remains," Manuel said.

Mara wrote the last value in the protocol. "The conditions too."

In the evening, the generator was switched off, covered and the locked area was taken over by a guard. The cables were not yet under tension. The chairs were stacked in groups so that they did not block the park overnight.

Javier took the empty belts with him. Daniela did not take the young people back on the same way they had come. Two went to the Cultural House, three to the market, one with his sister to Los Pinos. Their group dissolved without getting lost.

Mara stayed with the footprint for a moment. She didn't look at the rubber pad, but at the distances: to the grid, to the cable, to the next way. A small correction had made it possible to operate. It was certainly only through everything that was also right around her.

At the exit, Efraín asked again: "And if tomorrow someone says he knows the right attitude for everything?"

"Then we give him a water scale first," Mara said.

Chapter 12: The Six Lights

At five o'clock in the afternoon, the park was even brighter than its lamps.

The Garúa had lifted itself up without completely disappearing. Above the roofs lay a milky sky, and the six lanterns stood between the trees like things that did not need their appearance yet. Two carried new cables up to the tested provisional connections. Four were connected to their repaired lines. Each had a number, a switching time and a name on Teresa's plan.

Not all names came from Teresa.

Lantern three was called Wester Weg on the plan. On the tape at the base stood Die beim Kuchen. Lantern five was called Souther Access and below it, in another letter Javier's detour.

"That's not a technical term," Teresa said.

"But everyone finds them," Daniela said.

The chairs were in three open groups in front of the small stage. Between them there were paths, wide enough for children, older people and the car that Maritza brought her drinks with. The stalls lined the edge of the park, not the middle. Thus the place itself remained free.

Mara once went clockwise with the layout plan. The closed area was closed on the generator, the ground spit was sitting, the rubber pad was under the marked frame side. Manuel had hung the measurement values of the site sample to the distributor. Next to it was the name of the only person who was allowed to switch there: Manuel Quispe.

Among them someone had written: Not briefly Javier.

"I recognize Daniela's handwriting," Javier said.

"I know your idea," Daniela said.

Javier didn't wear a watch on his wrist that evening. Mara noticed it because he saw the minutes even when wearing chairs.

"Lost?" she asked.

"In the glove compartment."

"Intention?"

"I'm just driving things today, not times."

His car was standing on the southern edge, with the front to the exit. On the loading surface there were spare cables, two filled water canisters and four additional chairs. None of them was loose.

Efraín came with his sister Celia and her grandson Mateo. The day before he had said that he could help at the entrance. Mara had insisted that no one took over a post alone just because he knew him well. Now there were two members of the neighbourhood committee with him, and Mateo got no task except to keep his paper windmill in the cables.

"It is an important office," said Efraín.

"I don't have a vest," Mateo said.

"Then you are not recognized as dangerous."

Celia hit Efraín with her elbow. "Let him arrive first."

The generator was launched at ten to five. Manuel waited until speed and voltage were stable, then he switched on the stage line. Two work lights went on, although their light was barely seen. The engine ran low and evenly. The black support remained where it had been the previous day.

Mara entered the starting value and went on.

At the entrance Efraín not only checked entrance and free ways. He had set up a small table with Celia, on which program sheet, a list of emergency numbers and two bottles of drinking water were lying. The program sheets showed fixed starting times. Efraín crossed the time with pencil in the dance group and wrote afterwards.

"Who approved this?" Teresa asked.

"The dance group," said Efraín. "They're waiting for two people from Las Palmeras."

Teresa looked to the stage. The school group was complete and started as planned. The shift did not block any other program item.

"Then write: after the reading, she said."

Efraín did not change each note individually. He placed a sign on the table and explained it to the arriving person. Celia took his task from him after ten minutes so that he could drink a coffee. The entrance still had two helpers.

Behind the cultural house was a small first aid area. A nurse from Los Pinos controlled first aid kit, drinking water and free access for a vehicle. She had nothing to treat at the festival except a scoured heel and a child who lost sight of his mother for three minutes. Both processes were taken seriously and ended without any excitement.

The child was called Lucio. Efraín stayed with him at the entrance, while Celia asked about the helper group for his mother. No one let him search through the park alone. Two minutes later the mother came from the beverage booth. Lucio did not get a lecture. He got his wind turbine back, which Mateo had given in the meantime.

"Now there are two important offices," said Efraín.

Mateo looked at the two wind turbines. "But only one vest."

The nurse noted reunion, no injury. The feast remained successful because small problems were treated, not because there were none.

On the western edge, Maritza ordered bottles of Chicha Morada, Maracuyá juice and water in three tubs of ice. Her car stood parallel to the way so that no one had to walk around the dike. Under the front edge was a board that made up for the small slope. She had not chosen it according to Manuel's valve rule, but because her cups otherwise slipped to the left.

"Today, first sell my niece," she said.

Her niece was Abril, and she was fourteen, and she had change in a tin can and a sheet of money.

"And you?" Mara asked.

"I'm watching if she's counting right."

"She hears that."

"That's what she's supposed to do."

Abril's first customer was Don Esteban from Grifo. He ordered a juice, put it on the table and made every check of change impossible.

"Another one," Maritza said.

The second customer was a boy who paid for a too big coin and while Abril expected three times to change his mind about the flavor. She gave him the right drink and the right money back. Maritza saw both.

"First sale," said Abril.

"The first was one too."

"He was prepared."

"Many businesses would like to be prepared."

Maritza didn't take a cup out of her hand. She just pushed the tin can closer to the dry side of the table.

Manuel tested the pump at the well. The supply line was open, the switch on manual operation, the intended runtime limited to short intervals. The water did not rise to a high beam. It went soft at four nozzles, fell into the shallow basin and pulled small circles over the newly cleaned surface.

"That's all he has to do," Manuel said.

"That's all he should do," Mara said.

The unusual humidity value of the closed valve was documented, the old side pipe marked and the shaft closed off with poor air quality. Nothing changed for the festival. The well was only allowed to run with the tested supply. No one should answer the open question with additional water.

Children came first. They didn't run in a common direction. Some found the chalk lines of a game at the stage, others found the fountain, other Mateo and his windmill. Two girls stopped by the still unlit lantern two and tried to see their own reflection in their glass.

Four fields were planned for the chalk game. The children made a fifth because there was enough space between tree root and path. Daniela checked that no one jumped into the cable area and let the field pass. One boy painted an additional starting line diagonally over the others.

"That's not true," said one girl.

"For what round?" asked Daniela.

The children decided that the oblique line was for reverse rounds. Five minutes later nobody used it anymore. Daniela did not wipe it away. She didn't bother any way.

Rogelio did not distribute fixed places at the well. He showed the children only the low edge, the dry walking area and the side where an adult should stand. When the pump paused, some went on. Others waited for the next interval. The well did not have to run constantly to be used.

An elderly woman sat on the bench next to it and told me that the pool used to spray higher. Manuel asked when. She said before the repair and perhaps before the last mayor. He did not write down the statement as a set height. He asked if water had been standing on the way back then.

"Of course," she said. "That's why you sat on the other bench."

The other bank had been removed by now, and the memory explained why more water was not automatically a better operation.

Daniela distributed the youth from the Cultural House on tasks without having them compete in a row. Two helped behind the stage, three accompanied elderly visitors to free chairs, two brought garbage containers to the park edges. Anyone who was finished came to her or took a visible next task.

"And if two do the same thing?" Teresa asked.

"Then it's done faster."

"And if nobody does anything?"

Daniela pointed to a boy who just stepped in on a cable guard that had moved a van. "Then I say something."

Teresa nodded, she kept holding her schedule, but she didn't strike every deviation.

At six the music began with a group from Los Pinos school. A teacher played Cajón, two pupils guitar, five sang. The number of singers changed already in the second song because a girl from the audience knew the second voice and was waved up by the teacher.

The speakers were not loud enough to suppress the conversations at the edge. Manuel stood by the distributor and did not look at the stage when the first lantern was turned on. Teresa switched it on on the western path as planned. Her warm light fell on the cake stand and a part of the chairs.

No one clapped for the lantern. Mara was glad about it.

Ten minutes later, the second one arrived at the southern entrance. Not because it was exactly ten minutes later, but because the Garúa became denser there and the first visitors came across the darker path. Javier had checked it and reported to Teresa that the cable protection was free.

"Larner five, he said."

"The plan is five after six twenty," Teresa said.

"In the park it says that people are coming now."

Teresa looked to the way and switched.

The light did not make the whole entrance bright. There was an edge to the slope and a trunk to the next tree. Visitors saw where they were going. That's all this lantern was doing.

Mara went to the well. From there she could see lantern one through the leaves and the glow of lantern five on the ground, but not their luminosity. Lantern two was still out. Three and four were behind the stands. Six stood on the eastern path and would be needed only when the daylight went back there.

She had seen the six lights on a map at the same time. In the park itself, no point appeared from which all six were visible. Trees, roofs, stands and the curve of the paths interrupted the view. What was an arrangement on paper became on site individual tasks.

Néstor came from the motel El Recodo with a tray of little empanadas. He didn't have a name tag, but Mateo recognized him immediately.

"You are the man with the room that no one gets."

Celia closed her eyes for a moment.

Néstor turned off the tray. "I have several such rooms. Some are just occupied."

"Number eight too?"

"Number eight is not a guest room."

"Then what is it?"

"Today it is far away and closed."

He gave Mateo an empanada and took one himself. So the conversation was enough for both of them.

Mara asked Néstor if everything was quiet at the motel.

"The air is going out from the yard today," he said. "Rooms four and six are occupied, seven are painted. There are no colours in eight."

"Good."

"I thought you wanted it to be precise."

"I want to."

"Then it was too short."

He didn't stop at Mara. He brought the rest of the tray to Maritza, whose booth had a small snake in the meantime. Abril calculated, filled cups and saw each time in the tin can before she gave out change. Maritza spoke with a customer and only once intervened when ice water wanted to run over the edge of the table. She pushed a bowl underneath it.

The school finished its program. After that, a man from the Cultural House read two short poems about the coast. At the first many listened. At the second a coffee mill began at a stand whose supply was not on the generator. The man waited for a moment until she was finished and read the last line again.

It didn't seem like a defeat, people laughed, and he did.

After the reading, a brief speech was to be given by the Municipalidad. The office manager had come without a manuscript and with the instruction not to speak for more than five minutes. She thanked the Park Committee, the technical services, schools and dealers. She then declared that the renewed Parque Cívico was again open for regular public use. The ongoing examination of individual facilities, she said, remained unaffected by this. Then she said that the six lanterns showed what a joint planning could do.

Teresa was standing on the edge with the switchlist. At that moment three lanterns were burning. A fourth was just checked. The sentence was not wrong and sounded more complete than the operation.

The office manager remarked to Manuel on the box and added: "And joint planning does not seem to mean that everything has to happen at the same time."

People laughed again. Manuel didn't because he was controlling a clamp. Later he said he didn't hear the sentence.

The speech lasted three minutes. Afterwards the dance group came to the surface with all announced members. The delay had pushed no one out of the park.

As the daylight sank further, Manuel switched on the third lantern on the northern path. Their line was firmly installed, but the switch only reacted when the second attempt was made. He switched off again, checked the terminal in the box and pulled it down. The next turn on the light remained calm.

Mara wrote the process into the operating list.

"Do we have to lock them up?" Teresa asked.

"No. The cause was accessible, tested and fixed. If it flickers or gets warm, we turn it off."

Teresa noted the condition next to the number.

Laterne two went out again. She had illuminated the area on the children's crayons, but there a dance group began to build up and brought its own low lights. Two equally-directed light sources would have blinded the dance floor.

Daniela slightly turned the small lights apart. "This is how you see your feet."

"From whom?" asked Javier.

"From the dancers."

"I wanted to know if it had to be mine."

He stood by the edge, not in the group.

The dancers were between eight and sixty years old. Some wore costumes, others wearing the clothes in which they had come from their shops. They started together, lost the exact sequence and found them in smaller groups. An elderly man put out a twist and clapped instead. Two children turned twice as often as intended.

The music held.

The frequency display moved on the generator when a second speaker was switched on. Manuel saw the value, raised his hand and let it be removed again. The first speaker was enough for the surface.

"There are two in the plan," said the technician from the stage.

"The load plan provides one at the same time when the work lights are running," said Manuel.

"Then turn off the work lights."

"Not yet. Backstage is being rebuilt."

The technician heard the difference from the park and shrugged his shoulders. "One is enough."

It was the shortest technical meeting of the evening.

The fountain ran in its second interval. Its water was hardly heard from the first rows of chairs. Whoever stood by the pool heard it clearly. A child put a hand in the flat edge, and his mother did not immediately pull it back. Manuel had kept the ground dry and checked the overflow. The water remained in the basin.

Mara did not measure moisture values. She looked at the edges, the sequence and the people who used the well without having to give it any meaning.

Efraín was now sitting next to Celia in the second group of chairs. At the entrance stood the other two helpers. He had not remained alone, nor the entrance.

"You should help there," Mara said.

"I was replaced."

"That's allowed."

"I'm still learning."

Celia gave him a piece of cake. "He's learning slowly to keep it longer."

At about eight, five lanterns were in operation. The sixth, on the eastern road, was left out because a stand had set up its own tested lighting so that the path was sufficiently bright. Teresa looked three times on the plan.

"We announced six, she said."

"We have six ready to operate," Mara said.

"This is a weaker sentence for a poster."

"For a way a better one."

Teresa went to the eastern entrance herself. She looked at the steps, the shadow behind the stand and the distance to the next light. Then she asked the dealer to turn his lamp a little deeper. The shadow disappeared.

"Larente six remains out for now," she said when she came back.

Later, the dealer moved his stand one meter to the side for a delivery. Daniela noticed that the lowest level was now dark. She reported it to Teresa. Lantern six was turned on after Manuel had seen the connection again. For this, lantern three went out because hardly anyone came along the northern path and the light behind the cake stand sufficed.

All six lanterns had been used during the evening. Never did they burn in a single line, never made a perfect picture. The feast did not need either.

A photographer tried to get the six lights into a shot, but from the southern path he saw four. On the bench at the fountain three and the glow of a fourth. From the roof entrance of the cultural house he could have seen five, but this area was not open for visitors.

"Then I make six single pictures, he said."

Teresa gave him the inventory numbers so that the photos could be assigned later. He not only photographed the lamp heads. He took the way and the people in the area with each one. On a picture there was lantern six because her stand just gave enough light. He did not wait until she was turned on. The photo showed its purpose better than a bright glass body.

Saúl, the photographer's name, asked Mara for a group photo of the responsible persons. She did not refuse, but did not turn in the middle. Park committee, technical services, cultural house, dealers and helpers hardly fit into the frame. Two people stood behind a lantern and changed sides. The picture remained uneven and complete enough.

Maritza sold the last cup of Chicha Morada to Don Esteban, who insisted on paying with a big coin this time. Abril gave him the change without seeing it in the can.

"Now it was a test," he said.

"Now it was a purchase," she said.

Maritza put the empty tub under the table. "And I saw him."

She said it so quietly that only Mara heard it. It wasn't about Don Esteban.

The musicians from Los Pinos met again with two people from the Cultural House. Someone brought a second guitar whose deep string was not clean. The Cajón stayed and the singers did not stand up in a row. The band was not able to play the guitar.

Javier leaned on a tree, and he didn't look at the wrist spot where his watch would be.

"When are you going back the first things?" Mara asked.

"When they are no longer needed."

"This is not a time."

"I practice."

The music ended around half past ten. Part of the audience went. Others stayed at the stands or moved the chairs together. The official process was over, but no one had to clear the park. Manuel first shut down the stage system, then the generator. The engine slowed down and muted. The firmly supplied lanterns remained on the paths.

People kept talking without getting louder.

Javier and the youth carried speakers, cables and the first chairs to the car. They did not take the same order as in the afternoon. The heavy things first came to the front wall, the sensitive ones next to it, separated by ceilings. Manuel wrapped each cable by hand and checked the plugs. Teresa hooked the return on her plan.

"Generator without failure," she said.

"With an unused load reserve," said Manuel.

"I don't write that on the poster."

"But in the file."

"Of course in the file."

The fountain ran a last short interval. After that Manuel closed the supply and controlled the basin. No water was standing on the way. The damp line at the edge remained where the water had reached it during operation.

Mara helped Abril to get the tin can under the table. Maritza did not immediately count after it. She wrapped the unused cups first, dried the table edge and put the board from the left wheel on the car.

"Tomorrow we'll count," she said.

"You?" asked Abril.

"We."

Efraín brought Celia home. Mateo slept on Javier's replacement chair, the paper windmill between both hands. Néstor carried the chair to the car without waking the boy. Celia took Mateo on his arm and left the windmill. Efraín picked it up.

"An important office," he said to Mara.

Shortly before eleven stage and generator were dismantled. Two stands remained open because their operators themselves had electricity and permission until midnight. The chair groups had become smaller but not disappeared. On one the musicians, on another people, sat on the third nobody. No one cleared them away as long as they could be needed.

On the first group, the musicians voted the deep guitar string. On the second two dealers discussed the amount of ice they would order at the next party. Maritza sat down for the first time this evening. Abril put the tin can between both and said she wanted to do some calculations tomorrow.

"With me," Maritza said.

"Besides me," said Abril.

"This is more expensive."

"I deserve it today."

Néstor brought them the last empanadas, meanwhile cold. Don Esteban from Grifo took one and claimed that cold empanadas consumed less power. Manuel said this was the first correct load calculation of the evening that had nothing to do with his generator.

Mara sat on the unused third group of chairs for a few minutes. No one asked her for a reading. Efraín told Celia how often Mateo had almost kept his windmill in a cable. Celia corrected every number down. Javier listened and did not look at a clock.

The park was not only the scene of a successful operation. After the official end, it was still a place where people wanted to stay.

Daniela left the park one last time. She turned off the work light behind the stage. For a moment, the place there became dark. Then the lantern on the southern path, the light from the cake stand and the open door of the Cultural House to the edge passed.

“Everything?” Teresa asked.

Daniela looked at the cable bridges, the garbage bins and the locked generator site, where only the marking was visible. “For today.”

Mara was standing at the fountain. He was quiet but not foreign. In the basin there were pieces of light from two lanterns separated by the movement of the last water. From here she saw neither the eastern nor the northern entrance. She heard Maritza laugh, Manuel talking to Javier about the cargo and at the other end of the park a new conversation began.

Daniela closed the last work box. The light that had been needed for it was already out.

The conversation continued.

Chapter 13: The Official Picture

In the morning after the festival, two hundred and thirty-four photos were placed on the computer of Archivo Municipal.

Teresa knew the number because the photographer had written it in the handover receipt. The computer also knew it and ordered the files by time. Both helped only limited.

On the first picture there was an empty park in the milky afternoon light. On the last one Javier and two young people carried a loudspeaker to the car. In between there were children, musicians, cups, chairs, the fountain and many lamps. There was no picture with six bright lanterns.

"Have you not any of the entire facility?" asked Alberto.

The photographer was called Saúl and had accompanied the festival on behalf of the Municipalidad. He pulled up a second chair and looked through the miniatures.

"From what point?" he asked.

"From the middle."

"From the middle you see four when the cake stand is not in the way. Three when people dance."

"From the well?"

"Two luminaries and two light surfaces."

"From the entrance?"

"Five pedestals. Not five lights."

Teresa opened the map. There were six black symbols in a clean sequence. The picture seemed more complete than any photo and was still not a photograph of the evening.

"Larner three was off when six was turned on," she said.

"And two were out of the dance," said Saúl. "I photographed the dance group, not the switched off lamp."

Alberto sat down on the edge of the table. "The press release does not need any proof of simultaneous operation. Just a picture of the festival."

"The announcement said six lights, Teresa said."

"There were six."

"One after another and as needed."

"Then we write: The six repaired lanterns were used at the festival."

Teresa looked at him. "That's right."

"I try occasionally."

Mara came with the operating list and the generator's measuring sheets. She had slept at the motel until a truck at Grifo checked his air pressure. Afterwards, sleep remained a theoretical possibility.

"What's missing?"

"A photo that cannot exist," said Saúl.

Mara looked through the miniatures. On one picture Abril stood behind the tin can and gave a customer change. Maritza was visible on the edge, not interventioning. On another Efraín sat beside his sister while two other helpers were standing at the entrance. A third showed the open arrangement of the chairs and the wide paths. None of them explained the festival alone.

"This is what Teresa said."

She chose a shot shortly after sunset. In the foreground the students from Los Pinos played. Behind them people sat in the three chair groups. Two lanterns were visibly switched on, the appearance of a third was on the southern path. The fountain stood at the edge of the picture, small and quiet. No one was fuzzy, no one held a cup in front of the face, and behind the stage there was no cable pile to be seen.

"Harmless," Alberto said.

"Lesbar, Teresa said."

"This was meant as praise."

She copied the photo into the folder for the press office. The rest remained in the event stock. Also the pictures on which lanterns were out, cables were re-laid or Manuel checked a terminal.

"We don't all need to report," she said. "But we don't delete any just because they don't fit the schedule."

Saúl signed the handover receipt. Teresa added that all original files had been taken over. Only then he was allowed to pack his memory card again.

The other versions of the evening were on the big table. The approved schedule said when music, reading and dance should begin. The actual stage list contained two shifts and an additional group. The schematic indicated the scheduled times for six lanterns. The operating list noted when each had actually been switched on and off and on what occasion. The Grifo's invoice listed generator, transport trailer and fuel. The expenditure list of Maritza consisted of a sheet with three spots and a very precise sum.

"If you read only the schedule, the festival has taken place differently," Mara said.

"If you just read the business list, nobody made music," Teresa said.

"That's why both belong in the file."

"That's why the file now needs two brackets."

Teresa placed the operating list next to the time stamps of the photos. At 18:11 a picture showed the southern entrance already illuminated. On the circuit board stood 18:12 clock.

"One minute," Alberto said.

"Or two different watches," Mara said.

Saúl opened the metadata of his camera. She went after the clock at the Municipalidad facade, which since the power failure last month was about forty seconds. Teresa's entry was from the phone. Javier's message had no time indication, only the words way gets dark.

"What clock is in the report?" Alberto asked.

"No," Teresa said. "The report says that the southern access was illuminated with a sinking view. Both time data remain in the facility with source."

They checked three more positions. The generator start was confirmed for the minute. Depending on the photo and stage list, the beginning of the school music was five minutes apart because the musicians were already playing while the presenter introduced a teacher. The last fountain interval was documented but not seen in any picture. Saúl had taken Mateo at that time, who had fallen asleep on the chair.

"The camera obviously has different priorities than the operating list," Mara said.

"She was paid for that," said Saúl.

Teresa called Daniela, and she wanted to know when the work light was turned off behind the stage.

"After the last box was closed, she said about the phone's speaker."

"Before or after 11?"

"Before the conversation at the fountain or after the cake stand?"

Teresa looked at Mara.

"Write: after the dismantling of the backstage, Mara said."

"That's exactly what I said," Daniela replied. "Just shorter."

When the conversation was over, Teresa did not add an estimated time to the entry, but the trigger. The field was not intended for it. She wrote beyond the margin.

"When we make a template out of it," Mara said, "it needs a field for observation and occasion."

"And enough space," Teresa said.

"That can be done."

Saúl packed his camera. Before he left, he pointed out a photograph that they had not yet opened. She showed the park from the roof of the cultural house. Five lanterns were recognizable as bright spots. The sixth was behind a tree. For this one saw the three chair groups, the open paths and the people on the edges particularly well.

"Almost the official image," Alberto said.

"Almost in photos is often more honest," said Saúl.

Teresa left it in the overall stock. For the press, she stayed with the closer recording. A roof view made the park appear more orderly than he had felt below.

Alberto took up the sheets one after another. "The mayor's office wants a report by tomorrow. Brief, transferable and with costs."

"Transferable to where?" Mara asked.

"First to the next meeting. Then maybe to the regional place."

He sent her an e-mail, which was printed out early in the morning. A coordinator for pilot municipal projects asked for a presentation of “integrated operating methods” in Parque Cívico. They particularly interested in uniform processes, personnel requirements and the possibility to use the procedure at other locations.

“Integrated mode of operation,” Teresa read. “You mean the feast.”

“You mean what we describe from it,” Alberto said.

Mara continued reading. The regional agency did not offer any direct funding. It also did not require San Desvelo to copy anything, but a recognized pilot could later help with material, training and job shares.

“That would be useful,” Mara said.

Teresa drew closer to the actual schematic. “If they understand what was useful.”

A messenger brought a second portfolio from the mayor's office. Three brief notes were given in it. The first one said that two technical services staff had failed in the next six weeks. One had vacation, the other had planned an operation. In the second Manuel was asked for an additional night shift in the pump house. In the third eight new complaints from Los Pinos were summarized. Four households demanded reliable supply times, two reported pressure surges, two wanted to have a roof tank connected for the first time.

“Manuel cannot simultaneously care for pump house, Los Pinos and Park,” Alberto said.

“He didn't do that yesterday,” Mara said. “There were several people in the park who had responsibilities.”

“Those who knew him and built him up with him.”

“Then others must be able to learn what they can decide.”

Alberto took the schedule of the technical services. Next week Manuel stood in the pump house on four evenings, two mornings during repairs in Los Pinos and Friday for the control of the park fountain. Two entries already overlapped. A representative named Rafael was intended for night check-up but had only accompanied day shifts so far.

“He knows the safety shut-downs,” Mara said.

“He knows them from the leaf,” Alberto said. “He has never decided when a push will occur only at the top of the line and when the whole line is affected.”

“Then he needs an observed engagement with Manuel and a clear area in which he can act.”

“And outside of it?”

“Call, turn off or isolate – depending on the risk.”

Teresa wrote the three words on a loose sheet. “That's more than one order.”

The first household from Los Pinos called while they were talking. A woman asked if the announced supply window would apply in the evening. Teresa gave the phone to Mara.

“We check the hiring in the afternoon,” Mara said. “If it is safe, the care begins as announced. If not, we will inform you before the start.”

“Who informs us?” asked the woman.

Mara looked at the roster, where citizens' information was only provided with technical services.

“The Municipalidad” she said. “I have a name entered.”

After the interview Alberto added a responsibility for communications to the pilot's draft. It was not a hydrological size, but without it a reliable operation was not reliable for the inhabitants.

“That's the problem with a good evening,” Teresa said. “The next morning everyone wants to know how to repeat it.”

“The supply is not a feast,” Mara said.

“No. That's why it will have to fit into a table even faster.”

Teresa tapped the switchlist with her finger. “It's not just what was decided here. It says who saw the darkness before he turned on lantern six.”

“You can write the trigger, Mara said.”

“You can. But the message will only say that all six were used.”

“The message is not the operating instruction.”

“Not yet.”

Alberto put the three notes in a row. "We need both. A picture that can be explained and a way of working without the same people."

"A picture can be transferred, Teresa said. "A decision situation is not so easy."

Mara thought of the new representative force that would be in front of a pressure indicator at night in the pump house. She could not be told to act like Manuel. Elena in Los Pinos could not be explained that supply is dependent on experience and therefore uncertain.

"Experience must not disappear as soon as the experienced person is free," she said.

"I don't deny that," Teresa said.

"Then we need a model that captures security limits and permissible decisions."

"Yes. But no photo of it."

Mara smiled. "No photo."

The mayor's office called before they wrote the first paragraph. Alberto accepted the conversation. The mayor did not speak herself; his office manager asked if the six lanterns had worked simultaneously.

Alberto looked at Teresa.

"All six are ready to go and were deployed yesterday," he said on the phone.

A break.

"No, not at all times. The lighting has been adapted to use and paths."

One more break.

"Yes, sure. That's why."

He wrote two words on a note during listening: clear method.

"By tomorrow," he said, and hung up.

"Was that a vote of approval?" Mara asked.

"It was a deadline."

They started with the report. Teresa wrote the description of the evening: number of visitors as estimate with source, program points, no reported injuries, no overload of the electrical system, regulated paths, safe well operation. Alberto supplemented staff hours and costs. Mara formulated technical conditions for the generator, the provisional connections and lighting.

When they said about the lanterns, they argued about a single word.

Alberto wrote: "To meet the needs of the people."

Teresa wrote: "Locally, I am."

Mara wrote: "After observed use."

"Too long," Alberto said.

"It says something for that," Teresa said.

They left Mara's version.

The report was short, though. Four pages, a cost table and the selected photo. As an installation, inventory list, approved schedule and actual operating list were added. The invoices remained in the event file and were only listed.

"The regional office may not read the facilities," Teresa said.

"Then they still stand there," Mara said.

"It's not the same as understood."

"No. But it's the prerequisite."

At noon they went to the Municipalidad. In the hallway outside the mayor's office three people waited with applications and a supplier with a carton of printer paper. The office manager accepted the report, checked the signatures and first paged the cost table.

"More than expected," she said.

"Because not all additional devices were connected," Alberto said.

"And because many have worked."

"These hours are here."

She pointed to the photo. "That looks good."

"It was good," Teresa said.

The office manager heard the difference or did not. "The mayor wants it to become a pilot for park, water and communal accommodation. Time limited. With representation rules."

Mara looked to Alberto. That was wider than the regional request and wider than the feast.

“Three different areas of operation,” she said.

“The method is precisely to show that it is transferable.”

“The security limits are not transferable,” Mara said. “They must be set for each area.”

“Then you set them.”

It was not a hostile demand. The office manager had staff gaps, complaints and an appointment. A useful model could actually help.

“We're designing a limited experiment,” Mara said. “With our own clearance per location and impact control.”

“When?”

“First draft tomorrow.”

Alberto was breathing through his nose.

Back in the Archivo, she opened a new file. On her back, she wrote pilots – local operating methods. Underneath, she set the date and left room for an end date.

The next morning, the press office brought a draft of the announcement. It said that the park had been completely reopened with a uniform lighting system. Teresa put the actual switch list beside it. Two lanterns had remained dark, one had been provided for temporary purposes, and these differences had made the safe evening possible.

“The reopening is true,” Alberto said. “The unified system is not.”

“Unitly wrong,” Mara said.

They did not change the sentence to its opposite. The uniform system became a jointly audited operation of the six existing lanterns; the text mentioned that two technical works were still open. The press office first deleted the word, but re-used it after a call from the chairmen.

The photo showed all six light points, although two were bright only through perspective and ambient light. Saúl therefore provided the six individual images with time data. The archive recorded both the beautiful picture and the technical photos. Teresa labeled them differently: event documentation and proof of operation.

Mara checked the captions. In one photo Luis was called an electrician of the Municipalidad, although he had worked on a commission from the Park Committee. This made little difference to safety that evening; it could be crucial for responsibility and insurance. The line was corrected.

In the afternoon, another congregation called and asked for the schedule of the festival. She wanted to organize her own program as well. Teresa did not issue the plan alone. She sent out a sequence, actual switching list and a page with conditions: different paths, other connections, other responsible persons – re-examine.

“This makes the document harder,” Alberto said.

“We make his border visible,” Teresa said.

Mara saw how quickly a successful event turned into an image, the image into a message and the message into a template. None of these steps was wrong. Only what disappeared on the way became dangerous.

“The word remains local,” she said.

“Yes, Mara said.”

Teresa took the schedule of the festival and the actual schematics. She put both in transparent cases and stitched them straight away. Then she made a copy of each document.

“For you,” she said.

Mara took the two leaves. On the first, the evening was in times and order. On the second, it went into decisions, interruptions and reasons. Both were true, but only one had been written before.

“I want to make the second kind transferable,” Mara said.

Teresa closed the file. “Then watch what's left of it when you transfer it.”

Mara didn't put the copies in the same shell.

Chapter 14: The Model

Mara drew five boxes on a leaf.

In the first she wrote place. In the second observation. The third got security limit, the fourth permissible decision. Above the fifth she kept the pen silent for a moment.

"Effect," Alberto said.

"Control of the effect," Mara said, writing it out.

They sat in the small meeting room of the Municipalidad. The window went to the courtyard, where two employees loaded boxes of files onto a car. The fan on the ceiling turned at three audible speeds and one barely visible.

Teresa had brought the two copies of the festival. The planned process was left, the actual switching list on the right. In between was Mara's empty model.

"Where does the person responsible stand?" she asked.

Mara added a sixth box.

"Before the decision," Teresa said.

She moved it between the security limit and the decision.

Alberto looked at the series. "Six fields. For each process?"

"For every local operation," Mara said. "Not for every move."

"Then we need a clear designation above."

He wrote attachment, range, valid from/to and release in a header. His form was neater than Mara's sketch. It was also not narrower.

The first design for the park filled one side. Place: southern access. Observation: View of step edges and transition to main path. Safety limit: no unlit stage in visitor operation; connection and lamp without recognizable lack. Responsible: person assigned to the Park Committee or technical service. Permissible decision: Turn on lantern five if existing lighting does not make the step edge visible safely; turn off again when the area is closed or otherwise sufficiently illuminated. Effect control: Make way from both directions.

"This is the festival," Teresa said.

"This is a decision of the festival," Mara said.

"What if there is a stand in another place?"

"Then the observation changes, not the safety limit."

"Good."

Teresa took the actual switching list and tried to reconstruct the evening with the new leaf. Lantern five had been switched on earlier than intended because the Garúa had become denser at the southern entrance. On the form this fit under observation and trigger. Lantern six had been turned on later because a dealer had moved his stand. That also fit.

It became more difficult for lantern two, and it had been turned off when the dance group set up its own low lights. The new form asked for a change, but not whether the task of a plant was temporarily accomplished by another safe solution.

"Then we write alternative safe lighting available," Alberto said.

"Who is testing them?" Teresa asked.

"The person responsible for the visual area."

"And if the lights of the dance group are not electrically tested?"

Manuel added: Replacement lighting only with safe supply and without glare. The decision remained local, the electrical limit did not.

A rubber pad had made it possible to install the generator. Alberto wanted to put it as an example in the field permissible decision. Mara contradicted.

"The coating was tested for this device, this material and this surface. The transferable element is: stable installation within the manufacturer's boundaries, then load testing."

"So no rubber pad in the pattern."

"No. Otherwise, there will be some rubber underneath every wobbly machine tomorrow."

They did not introduce a separate column for technical examination. Instead, each permissible decision had to specify the qualification they required. An assigned person was allowed to switch light according to the visual range. A controller position at the generator could only be changed by one specialist.

The leaf was longer for the well. Manuel had fixed limits for power supply, barrier, water level and safe overflow. Within these limits, the person responsible could choose running intervals. Each change required control of the path and the basin. The old, unverified branch remained outside the pilot operation.

"The last sentence fat," Teresa said.

"Fat is not a security measure," Alberto said.

"But you find him."

Mara underlined him and added: keep technically separate.

"Better," Teresa said.

They went to the pump house in the late morning. Manuel had ordered Rafael for the day shift. Rafael was at the beginning of thirty, knew electrical protection and maintenance plans and wrote down every measurement value completely with unit. He knew Los Pinos above all from the map.

Mara put the new sheet on the work table.

"We test the form, not the supply," she said.

"Good," said Manuel. "The care has not registered."

The first line concerned the pressure corridor between the pump house and the upper connections of Los Pinos. Mara did not write a single setpoint. She entered an area that was derived from the previous safe operating data, with an increase limit and the condition that no unusual pressure surges were reported at the endpoints.

"What can Rafael do?" Alberto asked.

"Several steps are being made within the released area," Mara said. "After each step wait, compare top and bottom connection, document effect."

"How big is a step?"

Manuel pointed to the valve. "Here are five degrees visible. Less can be estimated, but not reliably repeated."

"Then at most five degrees per test," Mara said.

"And if the value at the bottom is already high?" Manuel asked.

"Then don't open it any further."

"And if nothing is yet up?"

"Then the decision is outside the realm. You or I are called."

Rafael read the paper. "How long is waiting?"

Manuel pointed to the old line sketch. "Until the two measuring points calm down."

"This can be six minutes or fifteen."

"That's why the values are here," Mara said. "Two consecutive readings without relevant change. Not a fixed time."

Rafael nodded. "I can check that."

Teresa wrote in addition to the control of effects: two stable readings at named measuring points. "Not only above and below. Otherwise, when copying is suddenly meant another top."

The sensor at the output of the pump house carried a number. The measuring point at the lower edge of Los Pinos a second one. The upper connection at Elena's street had only one name in the maintenance book so far. Alberto manufactured a provisional sign, which was to be replaced later weatherproof.

"This is a result of the model," he said.

"This is a missing sign," Manuel said.

"There may also be results for missing signs."

Rafael continued the valve under Manuel's supervision by five degrees. The value at the pump house rose first. At the lower connection the change arrived a while later. At the upper side the display remained almost unchanged.

"The same print value here means something different than there," said Manuel. "When I see this value at the lower connection, enough can be reached above. At the pump house, the same value can mean that nothing is filled somewhere in between."

"Then the measuring place always belongs to the area," Mara said.

"And the direction of the last change."

"Even the."

Alberto added a column for tendency: rising, stable, falling.

"Three words," he said. "That can be filled out."

"With time," Teresa said.

"To be understood," Mara said.

No one disagreed.

After nine minutes, the value at the bottom was stable. At the top he started to climb slowly. Rafael read both ads himself and entered them. Manuel did not compare the manuscript but the order of his ways.

"If you go up first, the lower value is later, he said."

"Then always the same order?" Alberto asked.

"No," Mara said. "Then it must be on the sheet when measured in which place."

"This makes comparison more difficult."

"It makes it visible why it is difficult."

They put the test back. For the real evening operation the existing hiring remained. Rafael signed not as responsible but as an established representation under supervision.

"Tomorrow night I accompany Manuel, he said."

"And after that?" Alberto asked.

"After that we see what decisions I actually understood."

Mara liked the answer.

They made a second sample without valve movement. Mara gave Rafael three fictitious calls: Elena reported an empty tank, a lower household a push, a third resident only an unusual noise. Rafael had to separate first, which required immediate backup and what triggered a measurement.

"Pressure shock: no further opening, let the connection be checked," he said. "empty tank: distinguish upper measuring point and tank inlet. Noise: ask for location, duration and visible effect."

"And the order?" asked Alberto.

"Danger first. Then measurement. Not after the call."

Manuel nodded. "That's nowhere to be seen."

Mara wrote prioritization after security effect in the introduction. It was a general rule, but not a general handle.

Rafael asked a counter question. "If I can act within the area, but can't reach anyone at the top of the measurement point?"

"Then the impact control is missing," Mara said.

"So no change?"

"Only if the existing position remains secure. Otherwise, set aside and call standby."

Alberto added one condition: Decision only if the designated checkpoints are accessible or reliably occupied. The model began to document its own missing information.

In the afternoon they developed leaves for three other places. For the parking lanterns, the individual viewing areas remained separate. For the well were fixed safety limits and variable running intervals. For the Motel El Recodo it was about the communally paid rooms and maintenance common areas. Néstor's airing of room eight stood in the field notes as an example of an observed routine, not as a prescribed process.

"smell, air draught, occupancy, Garúa such, read Alberto. "How does a representation smell check?"

"With a nose," Teresa said.

"In a form."

"Then do not write well or badly. Write: musty, neutral, detergent, unknown."

Mara added moisture to the tiles and direction of the air draught. The window at the end of the hall could be opened when air was pushing out of the rooms into the corridor. Room eight remained uninhabited.

“Why is it part of the municipal package if it is not occupied?” Alberto asked.

“Because the municipality pays for the hallway, the occupied rooms and the preparedness rooms,” said Teresa. “Néstor keeps eight closed, but its ventilation influences the common corridor.”

“Then the process is called hall ventilation with the inclusion of room eight.”

“That sounds longer than the hallway,” Teresa said.

They wrote: Air tour motel, hallway and room 8. The place was clear. The decision remained with Néstor or an appointed representative.

Daniela's farm did not enter the pilot list. Her observations were included in the field leaves, but the property was private and the sweep practice was not a municipal achievement. Alberto wanted to make it a voluntary summary for households.

“No regulations,” Mara said.

“A help,” he said. “Watch, change, check effect.”

“With the indication that paths are to be kept free and waste is to be stored hygienically.”

“Security limits.”

Teresa took a new sheet. “And with the sentence: The arrangement of objects is not a fixed specification.”

Alberto wrote it off.

At the end of the day, the pilot model consisted of a short introduction and different site sheets. The introduction outlined four unchangeable principles: drinking water hygiene, electrical safety, free escape and work routes as well as clearly defined responsibility. Afterwards, no uniform steps were taken, but permissible areas, triggers and controls were introduced.

Mara read the text loudly.

“That's not wrong,” Manuel said.

“You sound enthusiastic,” Alberto said.

“I experienced pumps that didn't run better after enthusiasm.”

“What's missing?” Mara asked.

Manuel pointed to the pressure range. “A value outside of it is not automatically the same error. It is a reason to check or stop the operation.”

Mara added the sentence.

Teresa pointed to the header. “And every sheet must say which place it is, not an empty template someone uses everywhere.”

Alberto used location and scope as mandatory fields. “No issue without entry.”

“Good, said Teresa.”

They gave two drafts to employees who were not involved in their production. A clerk read the parking sheet and understood the safety limit, but did not know whether she was allowed to switch a lantern herself. A technician read the pump sheet and initially considered the permissible area as a recommendation, not a hard operating limit.

“Then the words are too similar,” Mara said.

They named unchangeable safety limit by not to exceed / always adhere to. Permissible area became Within this area the designated person may decide. The longer headings made the sheet less elegant and clearer.

Teresa had both test readers write down what they would do, not only if they believed the text was understood. On the second round, the clerk realized that she should report a dark spot but not switch it. The technician recognized when he had to stop.

“A reading confirmation is not an instruction,” Manuel said.

“No,” Mara said. “But she finds bad sentences.”

The next morning Mara introduced the draft to the mayor's office. The mayor was present by video without having turned on the camera himself. He did not read every line, but he asked about duration, costs and criteria for demolition.

“Four weeks”, Mara said. “Weekly impact control. Immediate suspension of a local sheet in case of security problems or demonstrable deterioration. No change in hygienic and electrical limits without technical approval.”

“And after that, we have a method?”

“After that, we have results in these places.”

“The regional agency wants portability.”

“The structure and the questions are transferable. Not every attitude.”

The mayor asked Alberto. “Can a representative understand that?”

“With instruction, Alberto said. ”“The form is the same everywhere, the content is local.”

“It takes time.”

“Less than damage,” said Manuel.

The mayor agreed. He was not a man who liked damage. “Begin limited. I want an interim report after the first week.”

His office manager presented the approval to Mara. The text called her the professional manager of the regional department, Alberto as municipal coordinator and the localized for the operation. Mara read the demolition criteria again. They were included.

“The sheets are released before issue?” she asked.

“Through you and the respective person responsible,” said the office manager.

Mara signed.

Her signature was not under observation and not under an expert report. She set in motion a company that was to structure decisions of others. That was the purpose of the experiment. It was also more responsible than a series of measurements carried.

Back in the meeting room, Teresa put the approval into the new file. Alberto took the drafts with him to transfer them to the administrative template.

“Just layout, he said.”

“And mandatory,” Teresa said.

“We have decided on these together.”

Mara gave him the leaves. “No decision without a place. No number without a measuring point. No fixed time if the trigger is an observation.”

Alberto repeated the three sentences and wrote them on the top of his block.

In the evening, the technical design was still in its entire length in the Archivo. On the pressure range there were two limits, three measuring points and four conditions. No single number said how the valve had to stand.

Chapter 15: The Rule Sheets

The first version of the rule sheets had six fields. The second one had eight. In the third there were six again, because on the printer of the Municipalidad a second page was created otherwise.

"Two sides are not forbidden," Teresa said.

"Forty copies are forty additional pages," Alberto said.

"Forty pages are cheaper than a wrong sentence."

"That's why we shorten sentences, not exams."

They sat in the archivo at the big table. Mara's technical design was on the left. Alberto's transfer to the administrative template was in the middle. On the right, the abstract for representative staff waited. The three stacks looked similar enough that at first glance only the font size was different.

Mara started at the pump house.

The design included: re-sit valve within the marked range in steps up to a maximum of five degrees, provided that the value at the lower end has not reached the local boundary and that no sufficient effect is found on the upper end after two stable readings.

Alberto's version divided the sentence into fields. Valve position: permissible range. Releaser: upper connection without sufficient effect. Control: two stable readings, lower and upper connection. Step width: maximum five degrees.

The summary said: Set valve to marked value. After two readings check.

"What marked value?" Manuel asked.

A staff member who had prepared the abstract indicated a number in the annex. "These here."

"This is the upper value of the safe area at the pump house."

"Then he is clear."

"He is clear at another measurement site," Mara said.

The clerk was called Luis. He had never operated a valve and did not claim it. His task was to shorten instructions so that representatives could read them at night.

"There is only one setpoint field in the form," he said.

"Then the form needs another field," Mara said.

Alberto opened the administration template on the computer. It had been designed for maintenance jobs: device, activity, setpoint, time, signature. A permissible range fit technically in, but the automatic check marked two numbers as incomplete.

"The software wants a number," he said.

"The management doesn't want software," Manuel said.

"I can turn off the test."

"Then turn it off," Mara said.

Alberto needed a permit to do so. The responsible employee was in training until noon. Until then, they worked on the other leaves.

The park was designed for each lantern and each one had its own viewing area. The administrative template required one activity per plant. As the six lanterns were led under an inventory group, Alberto pulled them together on a sheet.

"Inventory group is not a business group," Teresa said.

"You have the same maintenance site," Alberto said.

"But not the same task."

Luis tried a short version: Turn on lighting as far as necessary on the named paths. Place lights in such a way that steps, edges and transitions are visible.

"That's useful," Mara said.

"It contains two decisions," Luis said. "As necessary and localized as possible, a representative then asks who determines what is required and at what angle."

"The person assigned determines it by the road test."

"Then she has to check the whole park."

"No. The area of their lantern."

Luis looked at the one line responsible. "There is parking."

Alberto changed it to: Responsible person per viewing area. This made the line too long. He reduced the font size.

Teresa watched him. "So decisions usually disappear?"

"Normally they disappear because no one knows who can hit them. I'm trying to do the opposite."

They divided the parking leaf into six sections again. One page remained as long as the triggers were only in keywords.

For lantern five, if the existing lighting does not reliably detect the step edge, first the step edge became dark. In the short version, turn on: 18:20 clock. The time came from the original fixed plan.

"We have deleted that," Mara said.

Luis pointed to the requirement of the office manager. The beginning and end of each activity were mandatory information. "A time is verifiable for a night representation."

"Darkness is also verifiable," Teresa said.

"Not in the reckoning."

Alberto suggested to enter both: at least 18:20 clock, if the step edge was not sufficiently visible. The version was longer but technically possible.

"In winter it's dark before," Manuel said.

"The trial is four weeks," Alberto said.

Mara read the sentence again. "For four weeks, the time can be used as a time of inspection. Not as an automatic switching command."

Luis wrote: 18:20 Check sight; switch on if there is insufficient visibility.

That was useful again.

The report was then sent to the mayor's office, which should be able to compare how often the six lanterns were switched on and whether the full operation saved staff.

Alberto put 18:20 in the header. "Control of all six."

"Control," Mara said. "Do not turn on."

"Stand here."

The narrowing was easier to see on the motel sheet. Néstor had described his habit as Thursdays. In Mara's field note, there were smell, air draught, garúa, occupancy and visible humidity. Alberto entered Thursday as a check day. The administrative template required an early period. From the cleaning service's roster came 17:30.

"Néstor has decided at some point in the late afternoon," Mara said.

"Then half past six is included in it," Alberto said.

"Sometimes."

"The representation is there from five to six Thursdays."

Luis asked how long it would be to ventilate. In the field leaf stood until smell and air flow normalize or the air pushed into the hallway. This could not be calculated as working time. Néstor had taken twelve minutes to observe.

This was the result: Thursday, 17:30, air room 8 twelve minutes.

Teresa put her finger on the sentence. "Four observations have become a clock."

"This is what the conditions of demolition are, Alberto said."

They were actually under: close door at air pressure in the hallway; open hall windows; check occupied rooms.

"The abstract is missing," Teresa said.

Luis added: In case of humidity or unfavourable air draught stop prematurely.

"Who decides unfavorably?" he asked himself.

"Néstor, Mara said. "Or an indictment person."

"Then the fixed beginning can remain."

Mara hesitated. The firm start did not necessarily harm if the condition of the demolition was maintained. He enabled a representation and control of the experiment. "For four weeks," she said.

Néstor came to the Archivo shortly after, because he was supposed to pick up the envelope for the motel personally. He read the long version and then the short version.

"Thursdays," he said.

"You called the habit so," Alberto said.

"I also call the Puerto Esperanza bus a night bus. Sometimes it comes before midnight."

"The representation is there from five to six Thursdays."

Néstor read the twelve minutes. "Once it was twelve."

"This means that you end earlier in the case of humidity or unfavorable airflow," Mara said.

"The summary now also."

"Can you work with it for the trial?"

Néstor looked at the maintenance contract, which called the Municipalidad as the client. "I can check at half past six. Whether I open should depend on the air."

Luis changed the first line to: Thursday 17:30; air for a suitable airflow up to 12 minutes at most. The line did not fit into the field of activity. In the print preview, it broke to the next line at most and pushed the signature on page two.

"Then we leave twelve minutes as a duration and the condition of demolition below," Alberto said.

Néstor stroked the paper with his finger. "If anyone reads only the first line, he vents twelve."

"That's why they're going to be instructed," Mara said.

"Then I sign for the briefing, not every Thursday."

Teresa added about the signature field: conditions explained and understood. Néstor only signed after Mara aired, occupied rooms and early demolition had gone through with him individually.

The precept was narrower than his practice. She was not clearly unsure yet. That's why she remained in the attempt.

In the afternoon, the employee returned from the training and switched off the individual value test in the template. Areas were now possible. But the short versions were already set. Luis had made a precise valve position in the pump house leaf: thirty-five degrees. It was within the safe limits.

"The value is not dangerous," Mara said.

"He is often too little at the top, Manuel said. "At the bottom sometimes too much."

"We need a start for Rafael, not a result."

"Then call it the starting position."

Alberto changed the setpoint to the initial position. On the front the word did not fit completely into the field and was cut off at the end when printing. There was now the starting point.

"No one will confuse this with target," he said.

No one laughed.

Teresa took Mara to the Depósito Norte, while the new version was printed. She wanted to assign documents to the inventory numbers of the park. The old storage room smelled like cardboard, metal and the moisture of a wall that never looked directly wet.

On a shelf there were boxes from the same procurement. Teresa had combined the numbers from two stocks. Six lamp heads and spare parts were assigned to Parque Cívico. Three pressure reducers carried the connections south of Los Pinos. A pump coupling was noted for the planned school district. Two weatherproof switches belonged according to the delivery note to the park of La Hondonada.

"The park that was not built," Mara said.

"The park for which material was delivered, said Teresa."

They didn't open the box. The inventory seal was undamaged. There was no receipt signature on the delivery note. However, there was a partial payment for installation in another file.

"Who installed?" Mara asked.

"The company no longer exists. The invoice only mentions the collection position."

"Park, school and three connections."

"And parts for the well."

Teresa did not put the documents together in a single process. She made references to: procurement, payment, possible location, unexplained assignment. That was less satisfying than a clear trace and correct for that.

"It looks like a plan," Mara said.

"It looks like a collection order," Teresa said. "Plans sometimes have receipts."

They photographed numbers and seals and went back to the Archivo.

There the rule sheets were in four stacks. Pump house, park, motel and voluntary household help. Daniela's mother had already collected a short version. She had been to the Municipalidad for another application and had seen the sheet at the information booth.

"That's not yet released," Mara said.

"It doesn't have a field of duty," Alberto said. "It's voluntary help."

On the sheet it said: Change objects daily. Do not sweep in the same order for two days. Keep your paths clear. Watch the effect.

"That's not our version," Teresa said.

Luis compared them. In the longer text it had been stated: Choose mode of operation after actual use; accept no fixed arrangement as effective; keep ways clear; observe hygienic storage; record change and effect. For the information stand, a list of four short actions had become from this.

"A household help must be short," he said.

"She says that you have to change every day," Mara said.

"That was the example."

"It was a possibility."

Daniela came from the House of Culture when Alberto took the stack from the information booth. She read the four lines and recognized the origin of each one. None was invented freely. Together they said something different anyway.

"My mother will make a calendar out of it," she said.

"Why?" Luis asked.

"Because there is daily and not on two days. It will be checked off."

"Then the sentence should say: change only if the use requires it."

"And what does it require?"

"If something is standing in the way, getting wet, dirty or a job is disabled", Mara said.

Daniela nodded. "That's longer. She can do something about it."

Luis set a new version. She did not start to change objects, but with: Keeping paths clear and hygienically clean. Change arrangement only if use or safety requires it. Do not accept fixed sequence of objects as protection. Note observation and decision if something is noticeable.

"I'll take it," Daniela said.

"The old one first returned," Teresa said.

Daniela called Rosa. Nobody took off. Her mother was not home for a shopping. Daniela put the new version in and promised to go there in the evening.

The fact that she did not reach the old one immediately was noted as an open point of distribution. Voluntary meant not without consequences.

Alberto took the stack off the stand. "We replace it."

"Daniela's mother has a leaf," Teresa said.

"I'm bringing her the new version," Mara said.

The mayor's office called at the same time, and the rules were to be issued to the representative staff in the afternoon.

Alberto hung up. "We can spend pump house, park and motel. We stop the domestic help."

Mara looked through the three leaves. In the pump house, thirty-five degrees was the starting point, followed by measurement controls. In the park, 18:20 clock was a common control time. Underneath the local triggers were preserved. At the motel stood 17:30 clock and twelve minutes, with the condition of demolition in the next line.

The formulations had become narrower. Not every narrow was wrong. Drinking water needed clear limits. Electric work needed sequences. Representation needed a recognizable beginning.

"Four weeks," Mara said. "We measure the effect. After the first week, we check. Every local person responsible can cancel if deterioration occurs."

Manuel took his sheet. "I write the print values next to the thirty-five degrees."

"You shall."

Néstor's copy was placed in an envelope with the maintenance contract. The parking sheets were sorted by lantern numbers. Rafael signed that he had received the instruction.

Mara put her release under each issue.

Manuel Rafael explained the leaf in the pump house. He showed thirty-five degrees and wrote three current pressure values. The starting position was within the safe limits this afternoon.

"If nothing comes up and rises down?" Rafael asked.

"No more opening," said Manuel.

"Is there a backside?"

"With the pump blade yes."

Rafael turned it around. The back contained measuring points, ground for demolition and contact chain. He signed the instruction and put a copy into the standby vehicle.

A second copy remained at the pump house. On it the word "exit" was complete because the printer had moved this page from another compartment. No one noticed the difference immediately.

"We start with the documented position today," Mara said. "Not because it is right for all nights, but so that the attempt has a known outcome."

"And if I change?"

"With reading and reason."

The instruction kept more conditions than the front. It was attached to the persons who stood in the room that afternoon.

Later, when Teresa took off the rest of the copies, she noticed that the copies for the park had only been printed on the front. The back with the six different viewing areas were missing. The printer had not taken over duplex.

On the front was the common control time. Below: manufacture all luminaires ready for operation and align to marked axis.

"What marked axis?" Teresa asked.

Alberto looked on the assembly list. For maintenance, a technician had set a north mark on each base so that twisted lamp heads could be identified.

"It's a control mark," he said. "No direction of operation."

"There is one on the sheet now."

The copies were already on the parking lot.

Mara took the phone to call, and she was also in front of her was Manuel's message about the starting night shift, the list of complaints from Los Pinos and the date for the interim report.

"We can reach the backs in the morning," Alberto said. "Today is only controlled, not changed."

Mara left the receiver in his hand for a moment. The Nordmarke was within the safe mechanical alignment. All connections were tested. The attempt should just show if a uniform control by representations worked.

"Tomorrow morning," she said. "And every specimen comes: axis only inventory control, local orientation according to visual area."

Teresa wrote the sentence down immediately.

Mara hung up without having voted.

It was a failed back, but it left the issue still in place.

Chapter 16: The Yard by the Rules

Daniela's mother had put the blue bucket on the north wall.

On Monday he stood next to the drain. Tuesday under the window sill. Wednesday at the north wall. The leaf from the Municipalidad was in a plastic case on the refrigerator. She had put a hook beside each day with pencil.

Change objects daily.

Do not sweep on two days in the same order.

Keep access routes clear.

The results of the study were observed in the study.

"You took this with you?" Daniela asked.

Her mother's name was Rosa and she just put the broom behind the kitchen door. "It was at the information booth."

"It wasn't finished yet."

"Then they shouldn't have put it down."

That was hard to deny.

The courtyard was on the edge of Centro, behind a low wall. The kitchen opened directly on it. Under the roof there were a table, two chairs, a shelf with pots and a box with tools. Nothing in it seemed neat enough to need an official regulation. The leaf had changed something anyway.

On Monday she moved the bucket, box and smaller chair. Tuesday she changed the pots on the shelf and put the tube in another curve. Wednesday she turned the table by ninety degrees. After that she swept each other in a different order: from the gate to the kitchen, from the kitchen to the drain, from the shelf to the gate.

On Monday Daniela had not noticed the changes. She had come late from the Cultural House, had seen the way to the kitchen and thought the bucket at the drain was a matter of course. Rosa had nevertheless noted in the booklet that Daniela had passed without contact.

On Tuesday, the smaller chair was standing in front of the shelf. Daniela had to push it aside to get a pot. Rosa put a question mark behind effect and then put the chair to a third place.

"So you've seen something in the way," Daniela said.

"That's why I did it differently the next day."

"Why not now?"

"Because Tuesday was the state for Tuesday."

Rosa meant it seriously. The leaf had made a daily experimental arrangement from observation. Every small disturbance was not fixed at the moment, but treated as a result for the next planned change.

"In the cultural house, you put the chairs according to plan," she said.

"For an event. If someone comes with Rollator, we will widen the path."

"Then you change the plan."

"Yes."

Rosa looked into the magazine. "The field for it is missing."

"You repeat the change," Daniela said.

"Of course. Otherwise I can't know if I made it."

"The paper should not say you need a second plan."

"It says I should watch."

Rosa pointed to a school booklet. It contained the objects, the order and the result. The result was every day: farm clean, way clear.

"That's good," she said.

"The path is clear."

"And the farm clean."

Daniela took the sheet out of the plastic envelope. Below was in small script: Voluntary household help. No municipal operating requirement.

"Do you see?"

"Voluntarily means that I do it voluntarily."

"It also means you can stop."

Rosa put a pot back in the place where he had stood in the morning. "You told me yourself that things should not always lie the same."

Daniela remembered. Last year she had changed objects in the yard, swept paths differently and left the small button in changing places. Not because a certain arrangement protected, but because no arrangement was to become a firm answer. She had never given her mother a list.

"I said that we should see what the farm needs," she said.

"Today he needed the bucket on the north wall."

"Why?"

Rosa looked at the magazine. "Because Wednesday is."

In the evening they cooked lentil stew. The table remained across the wall because it was supposed to stand like this on Wednesday according to Rosa's plan. Daniela had to walk around him every time she fetched water. On the third time she pushed him back.

"Then the Wednesday order is no longer right," Rosa said.

"She votes for dinner."

"The paper says change every day."

"We just did that."

Rosa looked at the table. "But not according to the list."

"Exactly."

They ate with the open kitchen door. In the yard the laundry was still hanging because the Garúa had become stronger and nothing completely dried up. From the road came voices and the sound of a motorcycle that did not sprang twice.

After dinner, Rosa swept away. For Wednesday, she was in the bookcase: shelf, north wall, table, door. She started on the shelf. The broom pulled a light strip through the darker dust. On the north wall, she lifted the bucket, swept it underneath and put it back exactly to the dry place.

Daniela watched without immediately intervening.

Rosa swept under the table from left to right. There remained a clean line, narrower than the broom and straighter than the joints. It reached to the front table leg.

"Was that there yesterday?" Daniela asked.

"Which?"

Daniela pointed to it.

Rosa bent down. "I swept differently yesterday."

"I know that."

"Then it can't be the same."

The line did not look like a water stain. It was drier than the ground next to it. Dust remained at its edge, not in it. Pink stroked with one finger over it. The tile was cool but not damp.

"Maybe from the table," she said.

She pushed the leg one centimetre. The line remained visible and passed under the old location.

Daniela took the booklet. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. Other objects, other order of rotation. But every change had taken place at the same time, after which the same control, then the same set of yard clean, way clear. The differences formed a more accurate order than the court had previously had.

"Today we don't sweep further after the booklet," she said.

"Then half of the people stay dirty."

"No. We sweep what is dirty."

"There is no difference."

"Today, I do."

Daniela lifted the toolbox from the way to the door and put it on the shelf. She emptied the blue bucket at the drain and left it there because he still had to dry. She carried the small chair into the kitchen so that Rosa could sit while washing up. She did not move other things. The tube remained in his curve. Two pots remained unevenly on the shelf.

She swept the crumbs under the table and the dust on the door frame. The clean line did not touch them intentionally. She also made no bow around them. The broom went along where the floor had to be cleaned that evening.

The line was extended anyway.

Daniela laid a ruler across the tile joint and did not observe the tip, but three fixed points next to it. At one the dust remained unchanged. At the second the edge became sharper. At the third the bright strip appeared only after a few minutes. The change was not even and did not follow any single joint.

Rosa fetched a dry cloth and held it over the floor. "When we wipe?"

"Then we change the surface and know less."

"But tomorrow we have to run here."

"That's why we're only checking if it's slippery, and then we clean when it's necessary."

Daniela carefully stepped on an already documented section with the sole of his shoe. He offered the same grip as the tile beside it. The line was visible, not immediately dangerous. This allowed them to continue to observe without hasty cleaning.

The kitchen was steamed by the washing water. Daniela closed the door for two minutes. The line was no longer open. When it opened again, nothing changed. Air and steam were not excluded, but the simple connection did not appear.

"The leaf has an effect on it," Rosa said.

"We're doing that right now."

"Without hooks."

"An observation does not need an immediate result."

She ran out under the table to the kitchen door. Not fast and not visible in a single moment. After the next passage with the sweeping shovel she was longer than before. At her top there was half a bow of dust as if someone had swept from the other side.

Rosa turned off the broom. "Now I have not swept by order."

"I don't either."

"And she's here."

"Then the order was not the cause."

"Or changing was wrong."

"We don't know that."

Daniela knelt at the door. The line ended at the threshold. Outside in the yard the floor was unevenly moist from the Garúa. There could not be seen a continuation. She photographed the line, first with scale, then the whole area. Rosa held the lamp without pointing it at a fixed angle.

"Should I call Teresa?" Rosa asked.

"Tomorrow. There is no danger."

"And tonight?"

Daniela checked whether the path was clear, whether the ground became slippery and if water came out of a pipe. None of this was true.

"Today the table is where we ate," she said. "The bucket dries at the drain. The broom stays here because we're done."

"And the button?"

Daniela looked at the window sill. There was the little dark button, which she had left in various places in the yard. Rosa had included it in her plan. Monday Sims, Tuesday shelf, Wednesday lower kitchen cabinet.

"Today he would be in the closet," Rosa said.

The button was on the Sims.

Daniela didn't remember having him there. Her mother neither. They did not take him as proof of anything. Daniela turned him around with the tip of a pencil to keep the situation.

On the bottom was in small gray letters: I was here. Next week.

It was pencil, not engraving. The font fit the flat back, as if someone had known before how little space there was.

Rosa bent closer. "Is that yours?"

"Maybe."

"You know how to write."

"Normally."

Daniela didn't recognize the I. The w could be hers. The word week she sometimes wrote with further distance, but not always. She did not take the button in her hand. She photographed front, back and position.

"What does next week mean?" asked Rosa.

"That someone wrote a sentence."

"That's all?"

"That's all we can prove today."

She put an upside-down cup over the button, not to catch it, but so that no one stepped on it at night or pushed it away when opening the window. On a note she wrote: Don't move – documented. The note was not given any time for tomorrow.

The clean line at the door was no longer. Daniela checked it again before going to bed. She did not mark the end with chalk. A brand could have looked like a target in the morning. Instead, she measured the distance from the left door frame and wrote it into the notebook under the crossed out Wednesday arrangement.

Rosa did not put any hook behind effect observed.

"What am I writing?" she asked.

"What we have decided."

"That's a lot."

"Then only the important thing."

Rosa wrote: Table pushed back to eat. Cleared away. Only dirt swept. Line to door observed. No wetness, no risk of slipping.

It was the longest entry of the week and the first one that did not end clean with farm.

In the morning Teresa came with a camera, measuring tape and a copy of the voluntary household help. Mara was tied in the pump house. Teresa first let herself be told by Rosa how the sheet had been issued. After that she did not ask Daniela where each item had been for the three days.

Teresa had stopped at the information booth, where the volunteer aid was no longer available. The employee remembered about twelve copies of the paper. There was no list of recipients because the paper had been voluntary.

"Then we don't know who else is using it," Rosa said.

"We know where it was distributed," Teresa said. "There the withdrawal is going to be. Also, via Radio Desvelo and the neighborhood contacts."

"Then people learn that I did it wrong."

"Your name is not called."

"But the neighbors know my bucket."

Daniela put the bucket upright. "The neighbors have their own buckets."

Teresa explained that the communication would not warn of daily change as such, saying that no fixed sequence of changes of subject is recommended as effective and that free paths and hygiene were still valid.

"So not everything is taken back," Rosa said.

"Only what made a possibility a duty."

"What decision did you make?" she asked.

Daniela showed her the booklet. "We no longer worked on the planned variation. We used and cleaned the farm as it was necessary yesterday."

"What happened after that?"

"The line only got longer and then stopped at the door."

"Can you say if that was an effect of change?"

"No."

Teresa wrote that very thing down.

It measured the line, checked the tiles with a humidity meter and photographed the transition to the threshold. The value did not differ significantly from the neighbouring tiles. Outside the yard was wetter by the Garúa than the kitchen.

"The leaf is withdrawn," she said to Rosa.

"Did I do it wrong?"

"They did it more precisely than they should have been."

"That sounds like wrong."

"It sounds like a bad leaf," Daniela said.

Teresa said she was right. She did not write: Bucket North Face, Broom Door, Sims Button. She wrote: Voluntary recommendation was understood as a daily order to be processed. Decision on situational use; ways and hygiene received. Observed line initially extended, after that unchanged. Cause unexplained.

She let Rosa read the entry. Rosa stroke a word: misunderstood. Teresa had first written it between recommendation and as.

"I read what was there," Rosa said.

Teresa looked at the summary. "Yes."

It replaced it with: was used as a daily sequence to be processed. Thus, the error was not in Rosa's ability to understand an instruction, but in a version that suggested exactly this reading.

"Now it's true," Rosa said.

Daniela took the booklet and wrote under the last entry: Plan finished; safe use remains. No catch, no new week cycle.

Then she saw the cup on the window sill.

Daniela raised it. The button was still on the back. The sentence had become weaker, but readable.

Teresa photographed him with scale. "Remove?"

"Not yet," Daniela said. "Not because he has to stay. Because we don't know who wrote it."

Teresa put the cup over it again. In her protocol, she called it a piece of discovery without any secure origin. She literally wrote the sentence off.

"Next week is no deadline," Rosa said.

"No," Teresa said. "Only part of the discovery."

She took the wrong sheet from the fridge, and the schoolbook stayed with Rosa, and it was now out of order, but a reasonable decision.

Chapter 17: The Ventilated Door

On Thursday at seventeen o'clock twenty-five Néstor put a kitchen alarm clock on the reception table.

The afternoon at the motel had been made up of ordinary things. The Monteurin from room six had asked for a second key because her colleague later came from the Grifo. The bus driver in room four wanted to sleep until eighteen o'clock and then an invoice with company address. Néstor had counted two towels, marked a loose screw on the balcony railing and accepted a carton of water bottles, one of which had been pressed into the container during transport.

Room seven had aired Mara herself in the morning, and she had opened the window as long as the air was moving from the hallway outside, and closed it when traffic brought in at the grifo dust. There was no leaf for that. It was part of a occupied room for which she was responsible.

Néstor had shaken the floor mat in front of the reception and then checked the hallway. In front of room four there was a sand grain stripe of the driver's shoes. Six years ago it smelled weak for cleaning agents. Nothing special before eight. He did not write all this down because the maintenance sheet only required the prescribed process.

"If I document everything before the clock, perhaps the clock is no longer necessary, he said later."

"That would have been an important observation," Mara said.

"There was no field."

He didn't use a kitchen alarm clock in the motel. For breakfast there was no clock on the wall for departures and for the TV the advertising breaks. The alarm clock had become part of the rule sheet because twelve minutes were badly visible on the wall clock.

Mara came back from the pump house and saw him standing next to the occupancy book.

"What are you cooking?" she asked.

"A rule."

He pointed to the envelope of the Municipalidad. The leaf was already soft on the edge because he had taken it out three times and put it back in.

Airborne Motel, Hall and Room 8.

Thursday, 17:30.

Air room 8 12 minutes.

If the air is damp or unfavorable, stop early. Open corridor windows. Check the rooms.

The text included Mara's release and Néstor's signature for the admission.

"You don't have to wait until half past six if the conditions fit now," Mara said.

"The paper says half past six."

"As a fixed time of control."

"There is no word of control on my hand."

Mara read it again. He was right. The title beginning was above the time. The longer version was in the Archivo, not here.

"Then the issue is wrong," she said.

"It's very punctual."

Néstor did not throw the sentence at her. He said it in the same tone as he pointed out to guests that warm water was more reliable in the early morning than late at night.

"We can put the paper out now," Mara said.

"We can also check what it does. You're here. Room eight is empty. The condition for demolition is on it."

Mara looked to the hallway. Room seven, her room, was right in front of the corner. Room eight was behind it, on the outside of the building. The door was closed. Néstor did not forgive it, and no one had entered it during their stay except for him during checks.

"Only if we check the occupied rooms before, did she say."

Room four was given to a bus driver who was sleeping. At his door the hallway remained dry. Room six was occupied by a Monteurin who worked at the Grifo. She was not yet back; there was no visible moisture on her tiles. Mara had showered in room seven in the morning. The bathroom was dry, the tap closed, the small floor drain free.

Néstor noted occupancy and condition. Then he opened the window at the end of the hallway a gap and held a thin strip of paper to the edge. He moved outside.

"Today the air pulls from the hallway to the window, he said."

"Garúa?"

"Poets than yesterday, but hardly any wind outside. In the room it can be different."

At half past six he closed the hall window again. He took the key for room eight from a drawer under the reception. He didn't hang on the board with the guest keys.

The door opened without resistance.

Room eight was as common as an unused motel room could be. A bed frame without mattress stood on the wall. On the table were folded cover tarpaulins. The curtains were removed, the bar remained. In the bathroom the mirror was missing. The tiles were clean and dull.

Mara smelled dust, cleaning agents and the weak cooling of a closed room. No mold odour, no waste water.

"Did you have a ventilated air today?" she asked.

Néstor raised one shoulder. "Maybe tomorrow."

"Why?"

"Room six is empty until evening, seven was open in the morning, and the air just went outside. Today nothing is expressed by eight into the hallway."

"So not Thursday."

"I called it Thursdays because most bus drivers then continue. Sometimes it was Wednesday. Once Saturday."

Néstor brought his old cleaning book. It contained no column for room eight, only short border signs. An open window meant airing, two lines meant hallway and room, a circle did not mean open. The characters stood on different weekdays.

"Why a circle?" Mara asked.

"Because the air went out of the hallway or was diesel smell outside. Once in the room was painted beside it."

"Can a representative read this?"

"My sister can. Someone foreign can't."

Mara photographed the pages. The old routine was not good because it was unspoken. It contained decisions that had not yet had common words. The pilot sheet had not supplemented the words. It had replaced the characters with an appointment.

"We need a legend later," she said.

"Later is after the alarm clock?"

"Today probably before."

The kitchen alarm clock rang briefly once because it had been accidentally turned almost a whole round. Néstor put it on twelve minutes and put the paper strip on the door opening.

He pointed in the hallway.

"Now air comes out of the room," Mara said.

"Although she went to the window in the hallway before."

He only opened the door to the marked position. The strip rose further outwards. Néstor started the alarm clock.

Mara checked the wall in the bathroom. Dry. The connecting valves under the sink were closed. At the toilet connection was a cap; the basin was removed. The floor drain contained water in the odour seal, but nothing followed.

After three minutes, a dark glow appeared on the tiles in the hallway in front of room six.

"Was that there?" Mara asked.

Néstor knelt down, the joint was wet, not enough for a puddle, but enough that a paper towel got a gray edge.

The same thing happened in room four, weaker.

"Close," Mara said.

Néstor did not wait for the alarm clock. He closed the door after four minutes and twelve seconds. Then he opened the window completely at the end of the hall. The paper strip immediately pulled outside.

"This is the right direction," he said.

Mara placed warning signs in the damp places and did not wipe immediately. First she photographed location and extent. Then they checked room six. In the bathroom the floor was damp at the door, although shower and sink had not been used since morning. The faucet was dense. The siphon dry outside, the drain free.

In the bus driver's room, Néstor knocked quietly. The man opened sleepy. His bathroom was also damp at the door. He had not used water since noon.

"Can I keep sleeping?" he asked.

"Yes," Mara said. "Not barefoot in the hallway until we have dried."

"I didn't plan to do that."

Néstor gave him an extra towel and put a sign in front of the door.

After that they went to the water meter. The motel had a main counter and counter for the room groups. Room eight had been equipped with its own small counter during the last renovation, although the sanitary facilities had been removed later.

The meter showed consumption.

Néstor compared the stand with the entry from the morning. One hundred and forty-eight liters more.

"In eight?" Mara asked.

"According to number."

"The number can be swapped."

They closed all the accessible points of the group, informed the two guests and watched the displays. The main counter stood. The subcounter of room eight did not move any further. They opened the faucet in room six briefly. The main counter and counter six responded. Eight stopped.

"No easy exchange," Mara said.

Néstor brought the sheets of reading for the last six months. Room eight's counter had shown small quantities on several days. Some fell on cleaning in the hallway, others on weeks when no one had opened the room. The sum never exactly matched the main counter. So far, Néstor had considered the differences as transmission errors because the billing only took over whole cubic meters.

Mara ordered the stalls not after Thursday, but after occupancy, cleaning and well-known work. Two higher rashes were located after a repair in Grifo, which should have nothing to do with the motel. A third one was in room four to seven without guests in a week.

"Did anyone change the counter?" she asked.

"Not since the renovation."

The bill of renovation listed eight undercounters, although the motel had only seven assigned rooms. A handwritten supplement said reserve. No serial number was assigned to a room number.

"Then the number on the pipe can be correct and the assignment in the bill can be wrong," Mara said.

"Or vice versa."

It took on type plate and installation position. The assembly for the test was later allowed to clarify an assignment. He was not allowed to explain the current moisture development afterwards before the result was there.

She checked the pipe guide in the maintenance shaft. The pipes were labeled, partly painted with old paint. Néstor had photos of the renovation. The feed to room eight ended at two closed valves. No visible bypass led to the occupied rooms.

"A leak of one hundred and forty-eight liters should be somewhere," Mara said.

"Or in the main counter," said Néstor.

"Then he must have moved."

They dried tiles and marked damp areas with detachable tape at the edge. After opening the hall window, moisture did not spread further. The joints lightened slowly.

Mara called Manuel. He could only come after the shift. Until then all the unnecessary valves should remain closed, the counter positions are recorded half-hourly and no wall opened. There was no indication of a pipe break that required immediate shutdown of the entire motel.

"You sound like you have a plan," said Néstor.

"I have exams."

"That's more than that today."

They went back to the reception. Néstor entered the counter readings in the maintenance book. Mara opened the occupancy book to confirm the names of the guests and room numbers for the log.

In room seven Mara Pizango, arrival twelve days ago, was paid by the regional office. On the line below was also Mara Pizango. Room eight. Same date of arrival.

The second line was not written with a pen. It looked like the print of one line on the next page, but there was no carbon paper in the book. The font was paler, but every number readable.

"Did you register this?" Mara asked.

Néstor took the book closer to the lamp. "No."

"Someone else?"

"No one writes here except me. Sometimes my sister is in the reckoning, but she wasn't there this week."

He was going over the line with his finger without touching the ink. The paper was not pressed in. There was no breakthrough on the back.

"Room eight was not occupied," Mara said.

"Room eight is not occupied."

"Neither of me."

"You have a key for seven."

Mara leafed back until her arrival. The line for room eight was not available on the first pages. It only appeared on the current double page as if the book had later supplemented the stay. Néstor compared print, ink color and distance with his entries. The pale text was not on the preprinted lines but a few millimeters too high.

"If someone had copied it, he would have taken over my weird seven, he said."

The room number seven in the first line was actually slightly inclined to the left. The eight below was round and even.

"Then it's not just a copy of the whole line," Mara said.

"The name looks like my writing."

"Similar."

They put a transparent sheet over it and only drew the positions without touching the original. The two names were not related to some letters, to others. That was enough for a documented similarity, not for an authorship.

Mara photographed the page and the pages before and after. They did not delete the entry. Néstor wrote with date: no actual occupancy; origin of the entry unexplained. He signed. Mara also.

"The sheet should document a routine," she said.

"It made a watch out of it."

"I released it."

Néstor closed the book. "You also said to stop earlier if the air draft is wrong."

"After I have seen what is happening."

"Then you saw something."

He didn't sound comforting and indictment, he found out what had happened.

"I should have stopped the issue when the short version narrowed," Mara said.

"Maybe."

"Not maybe."

Néstor looked at the kitchen alarm clock. He had stopped after twelve minutes, although the door had been open only four minutes.

"Twelve minutes are sometimes longer than a Thursday," he said.

Mara called Alberto and officially dropped the motel sheet. She first mentioned the safety reason: humidity in occupied areas after the start of the prescribed process. Then the deviations: airflow contrary to the usual decision, unbalanced undercounter consumption and false occupancy entry.

"Is the suspension immediately applicable?" asked Alberto.

"Immediately. No further ventilation after time. Room eight remains closed until a local version is checked."

"Should I also withdraw the other leaves?"

Mara saw the kitchen alarm clock. "Today the motel leaf. Pump house and park will be tested for the same narrowing tomorrow morning. If there is a deterioration visible, do not wait."

She could have finished all the leaves at that moment. But drinking water and parking lighting had their own safety conditions. A professional suspension needed a reason per place, not just Mara's guilt. That she did not completely discard the model out of shame was also part of her responsibility.

Néstor heard the conversation. "You let the others check."

"Yes."

"Then you don't make my hallway a rule for the park."

"Not again."

Mara took the rule sheet. She did not take a new time. On Thursday, 17:30 she wrote: canceled. Under trigger she noted: smell, visible humidity, occupancy, check Garúa and actual direction of the air draught. Decision at Néstor or instructed representation. Open door only as long as air guidance and condition of the occupied rooms allow it.

"How long?" she asked.

Néstor took the pen. "As long as it is necessary and safe on that day."

"This is too open for a representation."

"Then let her check the hallway window first and call me if she can't decide."

Mara added the limit: In case of humidity in occupied areas close immediately; aeration of the corridor; check the lines; notify the person responsible.

The time was empty.

Manuel came shortly after nine. He tested valves, seals and counters with his own devices. Room eight's sub-counter worked correctly, as far as this could be tested without flow. No pressure loss indicated a hidden leak. The hundred and forty-eight liters remained in counter level and did not fit any consumption of the main counter.

He conducted a controlled test at the accessible feed. Néstor informed the guests that all sampling points were closed. Manuel placed a reference meter in front of the sub-counter and opened the approved test valve only for a small known quantity. Reference and sub-counter responded almost the same. The main counter showed the same amount with the expected rounding.

"Now he counts in the balance sheet," said Néstor.

"Now with this connection and this flow," Mara said.

The previous surplus consumption could not be repeated. They also documented this. A test that did not create an error did not prove that the original display had never existed.

Manuel tested the damp joints with a surface probe. The values had fallen. Behind the wall there were no increased values, as far as the accessible measuring points reached. A component opening would not have brought any immediate safety gain.

"I can have the counter exchanged and checked," he said.

"Yes," Mara said. "But not tonight open the wall."

They sealed off the counter and documented the stand. Room eight remained closed. In the hallway the floor was dry again. In front of rooms four and six, the joints did not show any new moisture.

Néstor did not hang the new sheet in the envelope of the Municipalidad. He attached it inside to the reception, next to the corridor window key. The Time field remained visible empty.

Chapter 18: Against the Direction

Elena called at six o'clock and didn't say her tank was empty first.

"At the house next door, the line hit," she said. "Once strong. After that, air came."

Mara was already sitting in the pump house's office. Before her were the protocols of the last four days. Rafael had placed the valves on the prescribed thirty-five degrees and registered the values completely. No safety limit at the pump house had been exceeded. Nevertheless, more households in Los Pinos reported empty roof tanks.

On the first day there were two additional messages. On the second four. On the third one, a household had opened its valve completely and thus made the comparison unusable. Rafael had noted the procedure, had the connection secured and not simply continued the measurement series. On the fourth day, six empty or barely filled tanks came together.

The fixed positions had at least produced good protocols. Each start was within minutes of the same time. Each angle was readable. It was precisely by this that the effect became worse, although the operation had become more uniform.

"If people don't start their tanks empty at the same time, the windows are not comparable," Alberto said the night before.

Mara had given him the right thing. Tank levels, consumption and private fittings differed. But the model should work with these differences, not only in a city from equally empty tanks.

She had scheduled a check for the morning, and Elena's call made it into a backup.

"Is anyone hurt?" Mara asked.

"No. The pipe is dense as far as we can see."

"Valve closed at the house?"

"Manuel has shown us which."

"Let it be closed. We're coming."

Manuel was standing on the main distributor. He had red markings on the night values. At the lower end of the window, the pressure in each supply window had risen rapidly. At the upper measuring point at Elena's street, the effect came later and weaker. After the leaf, Rafael had not been allowed to open further because the lower value was already at the border area.

"He did the right thing," Manuel said.

Rafael stood next to him. "And there was little up there."

"Both are right," Mara said.

Inés came with the consumption data of the three registered connections of La Hondonada. She worked in municipal billing and had recorded every night's report separately in the past weeks. On all three accounts was consumption. Not large, but regular.

"Together four commas two cubic meters since the pilot began, she said."

"And at the main counter?" Mara asked.

Manuel pushed her balance sheet. The total amount had not increased accordingly. According to the undercounts, what La Hondonada had used up was not missing in the rest of the net. At the same time, the shortfall in Los Pinos could not be found as an excess at another registered branch.

"Maybe the Hondonada counters are going wrong," Rafael said.

"All three in the same week?" asked Inés.

"Possible. Not enough."

Inés showed the individual time series. Connection one usually reported shortly after beginning of the Los Pinos window. Connection two sometimes began earlier. Connection three showed small quantities in intervals, also as the main strand still standing.

"If they are transmission errors, they are three different ones," she said.

"Or three meters with their own buffering," Rafael said.

"According to device type, they send current sum levels."

"According to the register, they are connected to three households."

Mara marked device type and physical location as separate to verify. A plausible technical explanation remained a test until someone saw counter and connection in the terrain together.

Inés had also audited the accounts. For two accounts no payments were recorded for years, but no reminders were made. The third was compensated by a municipal collection position.

"Active in the hydraulic system, unclear in the administrative system," Mara said.

"Or vice versa," said Inés.

Mara took the pilot sheet from the clipboard. "The binding valve position is now suspended."

Rafael looked at his entries. "Because of my business?"

"Because of the result of the model. You worked on sheet. That's exactly why we can assign the effect."

She wrote date, time and reason on the front: increasing undersupply of top connections; new push; unbalanced balance sheet. Then she signed.

"Manuel, back to the documented pressure ranges. No fixed angle specification. Rafael accompanies and logs the measurement location, time, tendency and decision."

"Yes," said Manuel.

"The unverified branch towards La Hondonada is provisionally isolated. Only at the accessible, tested separation point. No work on the shaft with low oxygen concentration."

"The separation point is in front of the shaft," Manuel said.

"Check condition and tightness beforehand."

Mara called Alberto and explained the suspension. He didn't ask if they could wait until the interim report.

"Is it only for the pump house?" he asked.

"First for the valve specification. The other site sheets are checked today. No expansion of the pilot."

"I'm informing the mayor's office."

"And Los Pinos. With name and time window."

Inés took over the list of households. She knew the connections from the billing and knew which phone number belonged to which roof. Elena was the first to receive the message: morning exams, supply afterwards gradually, no opening of the affected house connection until the control.

"This is not a time," Elena said.

"No," said Inés. "At nine, you'll get the next report, even if we don't release any supplies yet."

"This is a time."

"For information."

They first drove to Los Pinos. Javier took the southern route because a market stand was dismantled on Avenida and the car with sample crates should not be between delivery vehicles. Daniela sat behind the empty bottles and the warning signs. She had learned in the morning in the archive of the suspension and offered to coordinate the household reports on site.

Before leaving, Mara checked each sample bottle against the list. Chemical examination, microbiology, reset sample. Coolboxes with temperature display. One set of disposable gloves per point. Rafael wanted to pack additional bottles if they found water in the Seco Canal.

"Only when we separate origin and sample type cleanly," Mara said.

He wrote a separate set of surface water – unknown origin. No bottle should later become a net sample by the same cooler. The reset samples came into a separate compartment.

Daniela took chalk out of the box and put it back. "Are we marking wet spots?"

"With flags beside and coordinates," Mara said. "No chalk in an unknown water line."

Javier counted the group's warning vests and water. Work on a water supply began with no one driving into the grounds without drinking water.

"No order by street numbers?" asked Javier.

"After danger," she said. "Pressure first, then empty tanks, then control connections."

"That's a sequence."

"Yes. For today and for a reason."

The pipe was visibly undamaged at the neighboring house of Elena. Rafael tested the valve, Manuel the pressure in front of the closed house valve. He was again in the normal resting area. The blow had moved a bracket but not torn out of the wall. They replaced the damaged clamp and left the valve closed first.

Mara took a sample at the nearest safe end point. It was flushed according to regulation, measured temperature, conductivity, turbidity and free chlorine and filled sterile bottles for microbiological testing. Each container got place, time and sampler. Daniela kept the resident list, not the measurement list.

“Elena's tank first?” she asked.

“The sample at the net point first. The tank is private and can have its own cause.”

Elena's roof tank was almost empty. On the ground there was enough water that the float ball was slanting. The inlet only gave air and individual drops. Mara also took a sample, marked separately. Elena stood on the ladder and read each label.

“No mixing,” she said.

“No mixing, Mara confirmed.”

At two other houses they saw the same thing: little or no inlet, at the bottom a pressure that spoke against further opening. The fixed valve position had not balanced the corridor. It had only restored the same bottleneck every night.

The roof tank was full in one house, although the connection was at the same altitude as the empty tanks. The resident had hardly used up water the previous day and did not close the inlet during the window. This contradicted no net findings; it only showed that a full tank was not sufficient to say anything about the road.

“Do we write it as working?” Daniela asked.

“As a tank filled, connection without reported shocks,” Mara said. “Not as proof that the pressure is enough everywhere.”

The next house was the inlet closely led by a private filter. He reduced the filling speed but was clean and not blocked. Mara did not take it out of view. The supply had to consider known house installations, while their maintenance remained with the owners.

Elena went door to door with Daniela and distinguished who needed a direct test and who only reported the tank stand. She did not tell the neighbors that the pilot model had failed. She said that the fixed target was suspended and the supply was being re-adjusted.

Manuel and Rafael set the valve back in small steps in the pump house. After each step they drove the measuring points in alternating order and recorded the actual times. The lower connection was not allowed to rise above its safety limit. At the top the tendency had to be recognisable before they continued.

Mara stayed at the junction of the southeastern branch. The valve was accessible, labeled and run in the former stock as reserve line. Its position did not fit clearly to the three active accounts of La Hondonada. It was not fully open, nor completely closed either.

“The rule sheet did not mention this valve,” Rafael said.

“Because the turnoff was not verified,” Mara said.

“Then nobody has disguised him.”

“We know that for the pilot week. Not for before.”

Manuel checked the tightness of the flange and the pressure on both sides. Then he slowly closed the valve to the documented insulation position. The pressure in the main line hardly moved. The three Hondonada subcounters continued to report consumption.

Inés read the data on the phone. “All three are rising.”

“Time lag?” Mara asked.

“The billing transfers every five minutes. I'm waiting for the next sentence.”

The next set was two, the third one stopped and ten minutes later all three of them went up again.

Mara had the valve closed and sealed. “Formally separated. The report says that the display does not end immediately after separation.”

“And that we don't know if the counters are physically behind this valve,” Manuel said.

“Exactly.”

They took samples on the main line before separation, on the accessible line behind and at two endpoints in Los Pinos. The closed shaft with bad air remained locked off. Mara resisted the simple

temptation to search for the missing explanation there. An unknown waterway made no oxygen deficiency safe.

At about ten o'clock Javier reported a wet spot in the Seco Canal. He had parked the car at the edge, while Daniela spoke with two inhabitants. In the otherwise dry bed of the canal there was a narrow dark line between sand and concrete.

They continued to the southeast. The Seco Canal was located in front of the edge of La Hondonada, deeper than the road and further away from the Pacific. The water line was hardly hand-breathed. It did not start at a visible pipe and did not end in a puddle. At some places it shone, at others it only darkened the dust.

Javier had already put three small flags next to the line, not in.

"Here she was at nine forty, he said. "Here at nine forty-two, here at nine forty-seven."

"Which direction?" Mara asked.

"When I go after times, to the southeast. When I go after the gradient, back."

Mara set up the levelling machine. Over twenty meters the channel fell weakly to the west. At the next repaired concrete plate there was a small counter-stilt. Water could have stood there or evaded sideways. The line did both not clearly.

Daniela did not touch the ground. "She has become brighter behind the second flag."

Mara measured surface temperature. The southeastern section was cooler, although it was higher. Conductivity differed from the sample from the main strand but not strong enough for a safe source. Chlorine was not detectable in the field. This could speak against fresh net water or for a longer distance, contact with soil or such a small amount that the test did not carry.

"So not from the line?" asked Javier.

"So no assignment," Mara said.

They marked six points, measured gradients, width, temperature and humidity on both edges. The denser the points, the less a single flow direction was found. Between points three and four the slope spoke westward. The temperature sequence made a source in the east seem conceivable. At point five the western edge was damper, at point six the eastern.

"We could draw an arrow in both directions," Javier said.

"We don't draw one," Mara said.

They checked whether the wind dried the damp surface differently. Javier set up two small protective shields at an equal distance to the line without touching the ground. After ten minutes, the western edge was darker under the protection, the eastern one hardly changed. Evaporation influenced the image but did not explain the entire course.

Rafael did not put any test water into the canal. An artificial flow test would have diluted the only trace available and possibly led to unknown depressions. Instead, he used the levelling device and surface temperatures.

"More measurements, less direction," said Javier.

"More known conditions," Mara said.

"And less arrow."

"That too."

She took two samples, as far as enough water came into the sterile pipette. One went to chemical comparative measurement, one as a return sample. For a complete microbiological sample the amount was not enough without taking in sand. The protocol said exactly that.

Rafael reported from Los Pinos that the upper pressure was rising slowly and the lower one remained in a safe area. Manuel had not restored a fixed angle. He had held at thirty-eight degrees because the tendencies at both measuring points were fitting.

"Thirty-eight won't be a new rule," Mara said.

"As today's decision stands with values," said Rafael.

"Good."

The province's mobile laboratory accepted the priority drinking water samples around noon. The first field parameters were inconspicuous. Turbidity, conductivity, pH and free chlorine were located at

the net points in the expected areas. The microbiological results took longer, but there was no acute indication that justified a cooking bid or a complete grid lock.

Mara still had no warning formulated that said more than the data. Alberto sent to the households: Supply is gradually stabilized. First test values of the drinking water network inconspicuous. Further samples run. Hondonada branch temporarily separated.

Elena read the message on the phone and called back. "Unobtrusively doesn't mean finished."

"No," Mara said.

"But can I open the cock?"

"We checked and released the adjacent connection. Your tank inlet as well. Slowly open and first observe."

In the afternoon, the lower part of Elena's line filled without a blow. The tank did not absorb audible water yet. Mara left the setting unchanged and waited for the next round of measurements.

The narrow line remained in the Seco Canal. It did not widen. One of Javier's flags was now standing on the dry side, although it had been at the wet edge when it was set. Wind could have shifted the sand. The flag itself had not moved.

Mara noted the observation without making a direction.

Shortly after six Elena called a third time. In the background there was a hollow, regular sound.

"That's the tank," she said. "It's slow."

"Does the connection remain quiet?"

"Yes."

"Then leave open and check the float when the tank is half full."

"Tomorrow morning."

Elena asked Daniela to come up on the roof later, not to replace the water authority, but because the ladder was safer for two. Daniela agreed and let Mara show her which parts they should not touch.

"When the swimmer closes, we stop," Elena said.

"And if he doesn't close, you can close the door and call Manuel," Mara said.

The contact chain did not yet exist as a new sheet. For this evening, it was handwritten in Elena's tank booklet: Elena, Daniela, technical layer, Manuel as a stand-by. A local decision could be documented safely before the final form.

"Tomorrow morning."

Mara did not put a hook for loosened next to Elena's connection. She wrote: Filling started again; no new push; further control required.

The pilot sheet remained exposed, and the samples were still in progress. The branch to La Hondonada remained separate, although its three counters still reported values.

But in Los Pinos, a roof tank filled again with water in the evening.

Chapter 19: In the Same Rhythm

On Friday morning, all six lanterns were north.

The parking service had checked the markings on the bases and turned the lamp heads as it was on the front of the pilot's sheet. The missing backs had been passed after the morning. But the alignment had already been done, and no one had reported a defect.

"Inventory control, no direction of operation", Teresa read on the supplemental strip.

The head of the park committee was Rogelio. He pointed to the six signed control fields. "We checked the axis yesterday. Today we are supposed to change it again?"

"After the visual area," Teresa said.

"The viewing area is on the back."

"Yes."

"The front says joint control and marked axis."

"The supplementary strip says that the axis only applies to the inventory."

Rogelio turned the page back and forth. "Then we have three instructions."

Rogelio had not acted on his own. The evening before he had read the front with two employees. The joint control time was clear, the north mark visible and the back was not present. They had photographed each lantern, entered angle and function and then closed the six boxes in the same order.

"It was the most complete control we've ever made," he said.

Teresa saw the pictures. Each inventory number was readable. Each case was closed. No line was open. The documentation was actually better than before the pilot experiment.

"The control is not worthless," she said. "The direction of operation is wrong."

"The report will say later that we have six lamps wrongly aligned."

"Then it must also stand according to which version and with what missing side."

Rogelio put his copy in an envelope. Parking should not become the guilty end of an editorial chain.

Alberto came with two technical staff members. He had arranged the supplement and wanted to restore the local alignments until evening. Mara was in the samples from Los Pinos and had marked the parking part for inspection, but not yet officially suspended.

"We first check the ways," Alberto said. "After that, every lantern is repositioned to where it is needed."

"Today a school class is coming," said Rogelio. "And in the evening, the senior meeting."

"Then we start now."

They went off the southern entrance. Lantern five illuminated in their north position the trunk of a tree and part of the lawn. The step edge was in the evening outside the light cone. On the western path lantern three fell now on the closed cake stand. Lantern one illuminated an area between two paths, on which nobody walked.

"More light," Teresa said. "Less way."

Alberto wrote down the correction angle for each lantern. The technical staff did not yet dissolve the brackets. According to the administration specification, an already decreased setting was only allowed to be changed after a new release. The release should come in the afternoon.

Until then, central control remained.

The plan was more than light. After testing the lanterns, the signposts were to be checked, the fountain turned on and then the park was to be carried out in a fixed round. The round began in the north, led counterclockwise and ended at the Cultural House. On paper, one person passed every point exactly once.

Rogelio left with Teresa. On the western stand, one had to return to the same path because of a construction site lock. At the southern entrance, the path branched out earlier than the sketch showed. At the fountain, a bench lay so that the direct passage became narrow when someone sat on it.

"The round is not dangerous," said Rogelio.

"No. But it does not control the same visual axes that visitors use."

They added four opposite directions on a worksheet. It was not yet a new release. It was a list of what the central round did not see.

The signposts were also re-aligned after the pilot's leaf. An arrow to the southern exit was now parallel to the north mark of the next lantern foot. The arrow did not point north, but its mount was turned so that it looked correct from the middle of the park. From the well it pointed to a side path.

"Why was the sign changed?" Teresa asked.

"Central visual axis", said Rogelio. "Stands in the additional plan."

The additional plan was made by a technician who had jointly controlled the lamps and signs. No regulation specifically required that signposts be aligned to the lanterns. The order lighting – orientation – wells had been enough to bring both into the same axis.

"Back to the presumptuous direction," Alberto said.

"Dismissal?" asked the employee.

Alberto signed the correction immediately. With a signpost, the safe direction was not a pilot attempt.

At two o'clock the school class came from Los Pinos. Twenty-two children, a teacher and a companion. They wanted to draw plants in the park and then visit the fountain. Teresa asked the teacher not to enter the well area yet because Manuel checked the running control.

"We start by the trees," said the teacher.

The children divided into four groups. Each one got a park section and a colored bracket. The paths were clear enough in daylight. Nevertheless, the blue group returned after ten minutes at the eastern entrance, although it had started on the western path.

"We followed the sign," said a boy.

"What?" asked Rogelio.

He pointed to the arrow to the Cultural House. The arrow was correct when you were directly there. From their curve, the children only saw the tip behind a lantern mast and thought it was the next exit.

"This is not an unusual outcome," said the companion.

"For us he was new," said the boy.

The teacher called all the groups together. At the well she counted twenty-one children. The companion numbered twenty-two. They set the children in two rows and both came to twenty-two.

"Then the first number was wrong," said the teacher.

A girl with a red clasp raised her hand. "I was there at both counts."

"I hope so," said the companion.

Five minutes later, the teacher counted again: twenty-three. A child from another group of visitors had stood next to the row because it also wore a red clamp on the backpack.

This was the third number. It did not explain why the companion had seen a child more than the teacher the first time. Both had counted in the same place.

Teresa asked the class not to run again for an examination through the park. Instead, she reconstructed the positions with teacher and companion. The teacher had started at the fountain and counted clockwise. Two children were standing behind the broad lantern mast. The companion had begun from the other edge. From there a signpost covered a child while at the end a girl returned from the blue group.

"Then maybe twenty-one and twenty-two through sight," said the teacher.

"Maybe," Teresa said. "We do not mark any explanation as safe."

She did not let the group colors be used for counting. Red and blue had appeared on pockets, jackets and a foreign clamp. The teacher gave each child instead a number on the attendance list and heard the names individually. All twenty-two answered.

"That takes longer," said the companion.

"Today is better for longer," said the teacher.

For future visits, they agreed to a fixed collection point outside the overlapping light and shield axes. The class did not have to prove whether the park changed numbers. It needed a counting method that did not make any visual gap into a security problem.

Teresa noted the three results and the respective list. She did not write that the class had lost children. No one was missing. The repeated uncertainty was nevertheless a security problem.

In the afternoon Alberto was given the approval to arrange the lanterns locally. Before the employees started, the pilot sheet demanded a joint function test. All six were switched on at eighteen o'clock twenty simultaneously.

The park was not yet dark. Therefore, the light was only visible at first by the brighter circles on the ground. Six cones were lying in almost the same direction. Between them elongated shadows emerged, which ran over several paths.

When the Garúa became denser, the transitions between the cones disappeared. The southern path seemed bright at its beginning and then broke off dark. Whoever followed the lighter area came to the lawn. At the western exit the sign was in the opposite light and could only be seen as a dark form.

"Change now," Teresa said.

Before the employee started the tool, a woman with a roller came from the Cultural House. She stopped at the transition of two light cones. The bright surface in front of her looked just, but on the edge lay a low level in the shadow. Teresa went to her and showed the edge.

"Yesterday she was illuminated," said the woman.

"Yesterday this lantern showed differently."

"Then put it back like this."

"We try to do that."

The woman took another path, which was longer but clearly visible. Teresa had the transition temporarily blocked. The problem was not that people were deceived by unusual light. A known secure edge had become worse due to the new alignment.

On the eastern edge, a father led two children out of the park. The signpost showed from their perspective between two paths. They chose the left one and stood after a curve at the well they had just left.

"We went in circles," said one of the children.

The father looked back. "The way was shorter on the way out."

Rogelio did not measure a subjective length. He accompanied her to the exit and closed the misunderstood branch with a mobile panel. Returning to an unexpected place was only reason to correct the orientation.

The technical staff opened the toolbox. Rogelio pointed to the sheet. "First control all six, then well, then correction. Otherwise the process is not complete."

"The process is no reason to leave an uncertain path," Teresa said.

"I just don't want to say that we didn't follow him afterwards."

Alberto took the leaf. "I hereby end the central circuit and the common orientation."

"Can you do that?" asked Rogelio.

"I am a municipal coordinator. In case of security problems, the local operation should be suspended."

He wrote the ground for the demolition directly on the front: Visual transitions worsened; signposts from partial perspectives misunderstood; safe local use not guaranteed. Then he signed and called the mayor's office.

As he spoke, the well started after its central time.

The pump ran soft. At the same time, a light on the way switched over at the pool. The edge was lit from the north, the opposite edge was in the shade. Two older visitors avoided the bright path and stepped onto the damper side. One slipped with the shoe but caught himself at the railing.

Teresa immediately closed the area with tape. Manuel shut down the well and checked overflow and path. No technical defect had occurred. Water level and pump were within their limits. The connection of lighting, guideway and fixed order had become uncertain.

"The well remains out until the new visual inspection," Manuel said.

"And the basin locked," Teresa said.

Rogelio put two members of the park committee at the barrier. No one had to explain on their own why a functioning well did not run.

The meeting began at seven. The first visitors came through the southern entrance. A woman followed the brightest section and reached the same entrance after a curve.

"I wanted to go to the Cultural House," she said.

"That's where," Rogelio said, pointing across the park.

"Then the path was shorter than I thought."

On the way back, she took almost twice as long as she took another bright section. Teresa accompanied her to the door.

Alberto had four of the six lanterns shut down. Not the same four as at the beginning of the work. At the southern entrance lantern five remained on, now again directed towards the steps. On the western path, Rogelio lantern three switched on and turned them to the transition between the floor and the road. At the Kulturhaus, an employee of lantern two was cared for.

Each person had to move from both directions before she released the setting. They entered angles, condition and visual inspection. The inventory numbers remained on the bases. No maintenance date was removed. The common time was crossed out, not erased.

"Six lamps, three on," said Rogelio.

"Six captured, three needed today," Teresa said.

The meeting was held in the old age. The chairs were closer to the Cultural House than at the festival. No one used the closed well area. As it became darker, a fourth lantern was added on the northern path. Their light did not point in the same direction as the others.

The first twenty minutes were left by two members of the committee at the intersections. They explained paths, observed backlight and reported where visitors hesitated. At the northern junction four people passed through without interruption. At the southern entrance nobody stopped before the stage. On the way to the Cultural House they had to turn the sign again because its arrow from the opposite direction seemed too far to the right.

Teresa did not make any success of it. The observation was made this evening with these stands and these turned on lamps. But the park became usable again before any complete new plan existed.

The school class had long gone. Teresa called the teacher and confirmed the number again: twenty-two children had arrived in Los Pinos. The companion had given each individual to a person who was picking up.

"Then everything is fine," said the teacher.

"All the children are there," Teresa said. "The censuses remain in the report."

At the end of the evening Alberto collected the pilot sheets, which were only used for the operating instructions. Inventory list, repair documents, measurement protocols and the new local inspection were left with the Park Committee.

"We don't throw away the lamps because the clock was wrong," he said.

Rogelio closed the box of lantern five. "And tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow, the congregation will decide how to revise the pages."

"And tonight?"

Teresa looked at the four illuminated areas. "Everyone only switches the lamp, whose path he can actually overlook."

The park did not become completely bright. It became smaller. Between the used paths lay dark areas, which nobody thought an exit was.

Chapter 20: The Wrong Kind of Help

The first voices in the community hall began before Alberto turned on the microphone.

"No new leaves," said someone in the third row.

"No one knows what to do at night without leaves," Rafael said from the side wall.

"They didn't know about the leaves either."

"They knew it too well," Daniela said.

Alberto turned on the microphone. It amplified a short knock, then his voice. "We are not here to defend the pilot model. We are here because we need a safe operation for tomorrow."

"Then turn off the park again," a man shouted.

"The park is not out," Teresa said. "The well area is closed. Four lanterns are operated locally."

"There are only three on my way."

"Then we talk about your way later," said Rogelio of the Park Committee. "Not about the number of lamps."

The hall was full enough that some were standing on the walls. Elena was sitting in the front row. Néstor had taken a chair in the hallway because he had to go back to the motel before ten. Manuel and Rafael sat side by side, not as the same side. Mara stood at the table with Alberto and Teresa.

Four types of documents were on the table: the exposed rule sheets, measurement protocols, inventory lists and empty arches. Teresa had deliberately not made them a stack.

Elena was the first to speak.

"My tank is filling up again," she said. "That's good, but I don't want to guess whether water comes today every night. A time span is no harmful simultaneity. It's necessary when you cook, bathe children and check the tank."

A man behind her said: "In the past, people heard when the pump was running."

"I used to live closer to the pump," Elena said. "Now I only hear my empty tank."

Rafael raised his hand. "I also need times. Not to always set the valve the same, for when I have to measure and who I reach when the values don't fit."

"You have Manuel, someone said."

"Manuel sleeps sometimes."

Manuel nodded. "That's confirmed."

A short laugh went through the hall. It did not matter.

Rafael continued. "I can't guess his decisions. There were thirty-five degrees in the paper. I set them and controlled the boundaries. I saw that the same value at three measuring points means something else on a day shift. I need to document it at night."

"Then write down everything Manuel knows, said a woman."

"I don't know everything," Manuel said.

"But more than the leaf."

"Yes. And if it only stays in my head, that's a risk too."

A representative from the park came forward. She had had been on the evening of the joint circuit service and had gone off the control plan in the printed order.

"I knew the lantern numbers," she said. "I knew three was on the western road, but on my leaf there was first one, then two, then three. When I arrived at three, the cake stand had already closed and the path was used differently. I still controlled the same angle."

"Why not change immediately?" asked Rogelio.

"Because the new release was not yet signed. If I turn without release and someone falls, I am responsible. If I don't spin and someone falls, obviously so too."

Alberto wrote liability to the board. "A local rule must not only allow decision. It must specify when the person is authorized to do so."

"And when it shuts the area down," Teresa said.

The representative force nodded. "I can explain a lock. An improvised technical change not always."

An electrician from the last row added that no one was allowed to use a switchbox just because he knew the way well. Observation and intervention could be carried out by different persons.

"Then a lamp needs two people in charge?" someone asked.

"Perhaps one for vision and one for electrical maintenance," Manuel said. "That's not double. That's two tasks."

Mara looked at him. In the pump house he had often treated forms as additional work, but never considered unnecessary. Now he publicly said that experience without handover was not sufficient operating mode.

A resident of Los Pinos got up. "We used to regulate our tanks ourselves. When the inlet brought air, we quickly opened the valve completely. Then the water came."

"Or the push," Elena said.

"Never with me."

Mara asked if there was a pressure reducer installed on his connection.

"The old one. He sometimes whistles."

"Then fast complete opening is not a permissible habit," Manuel said. "Irrespective of the pilot's sheet."

"Now everything is forbidden."

"No. That was uncertain before."

The man did not sit down immediately. "And if my tank remains empty?"

"Then you need a contact chain and a check of the connection," Mara said. "Not a handle that might have worked for another house."

Daniela reported about Rosa's farm. She didn't show the photo of the sentence under the button. It was about the action that night, not the unexplained find.

"The voluntary aid sheet said to change things every day and not sweep in the same order," she said. "My mother did exactly that. She made a weekly plan for every change. The yard was clean. The path was clear. Even so, she had turned an aid into a new fixed order."

"Has the order hurt?" asked a woman.

"The table stood in the way of cooking. And we have observed a line on the tiles, whose cause we do not know."

"Then she would have had to move the table."

"We did that, not according to plan, but because he was in the way."

"So you don't need leaves."

"You need free ways on the leaf," Daniela said. "Not the place of the table."

Néstor raised his copy. "I had a spot on the clock."

He explained how a fixed time had become Thursdays and twelve minutes of situation-dependent ventilation. He described the damp tiles in front of the occupied rooms, the dry floor in front of room eight and the consumption on a counter that did not fit the main counter.

"Why do you even air this room?" someone asked.

"Because it is located in a common hallway and also moves air closed."

"Why don't you rent it?"

"That's another question."

"Is it dangerous?"

"Not according to what we have tested."

"Then rent it."

"No."

Néstor folded the sheet, and he offered no further explanation.

A woman from Las Palmeras asked if the unusual counter level proved that airing water was passing through the hallway.

"No," Mara said. "The main counter didn't show the crowd. We haven't found a physical connection that explains both."

"But it happened at the same time."

"This is an observation. It remains in the protocol."

"If you don't conclude anything from it, why do you write it down?"

Néstor answered in front of Mara. "So that the next man knows what was tested and what was not."

The woman was not satisfied. "Then in the end, you only have more questions."

"You have less wrong answers," Teresa said.

Another resident wanted to seal room eight immediately permanently. A construction worker contradicted; a sealed room could hide moisture and pest infestation. Both proposals were practical decisions with consequences. Néstor said the door remained closed and controllable, not walled. The assembly did not vote on it. The motel was not a public mystery that the hall was allowed to possess.

A market trader said that her family had been washing the beverage containers in a certain order for years and no one had become ill. She did not want a working group to cut this habit.

"What are you washing with?" Mara asked.

"Water, cleaners, clear water."

"The order is hygienically justified."

"And then I put the containers on my head."

"That they may run."

"Exactly."

"Then this remains a necessary process."

Another dealer said he always put a coin on the lid of his water tank before opening it. If it remained lying down, the day would be quiet.

"Is the coin water quality or pressure changing?" asked Elena.

"Not everything has to change something."

"Then it doesn't belong in the operating specification," Mara said.

"But I may do it."

"As long as the coin does not fall into the tank and does not replace a safety test."

A woman from the health centre raised her hand. "We need to distinguish what is ineffective and what is dangerous. The coin is probably ineffective. Open tanks, unmarked containers and refilling disinfectants to taste are dangerous."

A man said his family had been putting an additional lid of chlorine solution into the tank for years when water was cloudy.

"What concentration?" Mara asked.

"A lid."

"What container, what volume, which tank?"

He could only call the tank, and the bottle changed according to the purchase.

"Then this is not a permissible dosage," said the health center employee. "Tractics must be reported and tested. More means do not replace any cause and can harm themselves."

"But nobody got sick."

"This does not prove the concentration."

Mara offered to examine the safe cleaning recommendation together. She did not take the lid rule as local knowledge. Not every habit was responsible for experience.

At the other end of the hall, a dealer defended her firm rinsing sequence. Water, cleaners, clear rinsing and drying could be hygienically justified. Daniela said that this order does not need to be varied at the moment.

"Then we're back to rules," said the man with the chlorine bottle.

"At a reasonable limit and an audited process," said the dealer. "Not with your lid."

The differences in the hall were not more friendly. They became more precise.

The assembly became more restless when a man demanded that all the records be destroyed, holding up a parking leaf. "These leaves have made the paths wrong."

Teresa opened the inventory list. "This sheet says which lantern is where, when their management was checked and who can wait for it. It did not make any way wrong."

She took the pilot sheet. "This one has turned a control mark into a direction of operation. That's suspended."

"Paper is paper."

"No," Teresa said. "A property record is not a switching order. A measurement value is not a time. If we throw it all away, tomorrow we won't even know which line was checked."

The man let the leaf sink, but he did not sit down yet.

Alberto called for a break. No one left. Instead, smaller conversations were formed. Manuel spoke to Rafael about the three measuring points. Elena showed Inés what message she had understood the previous day and which did not. Daniela told Rosa on the phone that the voluntary summary should be officially withdrawn.

At the edge of the hall, Rogelio placed three parking sheets on a chair. One contained inventory numbers and test date. One was the common switching time. The third was the back with the viewing areas.

"If we expose everything, which one can stay in the box tomorrow?" he asked Teresa.

"Inventory and safety testing. The switching time is not. The viewing areas only as a basis for work until we have checked them on site."

"Then it must be on every leaf what kind it is."

Teresa wrote down the categories: inventory, safety, operation, observation. One sheet could contain several, but each statement had to be clearly assigned.

"It's getting more complicated," said Rogelio.

"The park was complicated, and the paper just hid it."

Elena and Inés were talking about another word. Supply time sounded like a guarantee for Elena that was broken at every delay. Time windows sounded too inaccurate for an older neighbor. They didn't agree yet. Inés noted that the message had to contain beginning, expected end and next information time. The word could follow the next day.

Mara stayed at the table. Before her, her signature was on the issues. She could have said that the mayor's office had pushed for mandatory submission and the printer had left out a back. Everything was right. None of this changed her decision.

When Alberto switched the microphone on again, Mara took it.

"I designed the pilot model," she said. "I wanted to document security limits, observations and responsibility so that representatives could work. As the summaries narrowed, I still released the issue. I thought the attempt was limited and controllable. That was a wrong decision."

Someone asked: "Then no rules anymore?"

"I didn't say that."

"Then what?"

Mara looked at Elena, Rafael, Daniela and Néstor. Their examples did not fit into a single sentence.

"We have to answer three questions for each place," she said. "What is the limit? What does the person responsible recognize that something has to change? And who can decide?"

"These are fields again," said the man with the park leaf.

"Maybe," Mara said. "But no answer yet."

Manuel took the microphone. "A fourth question comes up in the pump house: When do you have to stop and call someone?"

"In the market: What is hygiene and what is just habit?" said the trader.

"In Los Pinos: When are we informed?" said Elena.

"At the motel: Which direction does the air come from?" said Néstor.

Nobody said that it all worked out.

Alberto wrote the proposals to the board, and then he put only two decisions to vote.

First, all uniform mandatory sheets of the pilot test are suspended until local revision. Inventories, safety limits, measurement data and maintenance documents remain valid.

Secondly, the revision will begin the next morning at the respective plants and companies. Responsible persons, representatives and affected users will participate.

Both decisions received a clear majority. Some voted against the first, because they wanted to abolish the mandatory papers immediately. Others opposed the second, because they first demanded a new bill in the Municipalidad.

Teresa also noted the votes against.

"When do we meet?" Rafael asked.

Manuel said: "At seven in the pump house."

Elena raised her hand. "This is a time."
"For the start of work," said Manuel.
"Then she can stay."

Chapter 21: Each One Different

At seven o'clock, there were no empty forms on the table in the pump house.

Teresa had instead brought paper, clipboards and copies of actual measurement protocols. Alberto did not open the old administrative template. Mara wrote five headlines on the wall panel:

Security limit.

Local observation.

Permissible area.

- I'm gonna do it.

Person in charge.

Manuel put a sixth among them: cancellation and notification.

"It belongs to every border," Mara said.

"Then it should be visible there."

Teresa drew a line under each heading and left space under it varying. Alberto wanted to make the fields straight up at first. This looked cleaner, but even the old pump protocol showed that a safety limit needed several sets and the name of a responsible person sometimes fit into one line.

"The form is not to pretend that all answers are the same," Teresa said.

"Then I don't get a symmetrical side," Alberto said.

"You get a readable one."

They decided to keep the headlines tight, not the field size. Each local version was allowed to have a second page. On each subsequent page, the attachment, version number and date of validity had to be repeated so that a lost first page did not make a nameless command out of conditions.

Mara added a line above: Purpose of this version. At the pump house he was called safe supply of the designated pressure zone. At the market he would be called hygienic provision of drinks. That the purposes were different should be visible before someone compared the individual steps.

Rafael stood in front of valve one. "We don't write first."

"What first?" asked Alberto.

"We drive the measuring points."

They started at the exit of the pump house, then at the lower end and lastly in Elena's street. Manuel didn't explain what he usually felt. He showed how long it was running after a change and what noises indicated air or rapid pressure rise. Rafael repeated every step and said loudly what he would decide.

The first valve had the permissible angle range between two marked positions. Within it was a pressure corridor, but only together with the designated measuring points and their tendency. A single value was not a switching command.

"The trigger?" Teresa asked.

"Two stable measurements without sufficient supply," said Rafael. "Below limit. No report of pressure shock."

"Change?"

"Maximum five degrees. Then remeasure."

"Abortion?"

"Pressure shock, limit below, unusual turbidity, leak or no explainable reaction."

"Who decides?"

"Introduced shift. Outside the Manuel or Mara area."

Only after that did Alberto transfer the points into a paper.

The second valve was smaller because the pipe fed an older pressure reducer. The third one allowed to open further in the same direction, but only if the pump flow did not rise strongly at the same time. The three sheets had the same headings and different contents.

"This is marked as a deviation in the system," Alberto said.

"Then we call it local version," Teresa said.

He put in the header: Attachment and locally released version. Below came a version number. The system was allowed to recognize the same fields, not to demand the same values.

Manuel wrote the three valve numbers on the folder. He left room behind it.

Before they left, Manuel and Rafael changed roles. Rafael explained a simulated message: upper connection falls, lower stable, pump current normal. Manuel played the representation and asked for a fixed position on purpose.

"There is no such thing," said Rafael. "I first check which of the three valves and which measuring point are meant."

"And if the inhabitants already have no water?"

"Then I inform the contact person about the exam. I do not raise faster just because the complaint is urgent."

"Good. And if a pressure shock is reported down at the same time?"

"No further opening. Secure connection, check area, call you or Mara."

Mara cut the last part. "Not me as a person. Professionally responsible on-call duty. My mission ends."

Alberto entered the function and the current contact chain. A local sheet was not allowed to hang on her phone number after Mara's departure.

At the market they met Maritza and two other traders before the opening. On the table were water containers, cleaners, dry racks and a bucket that no one used for drinking water.

"What is always true?" Mara asked.

Maritza pointed to the separate containers. "Drinking water remains covered. Cleaning water is marked. Cups do not return to the clean stack."

A dealer added the order for cleaning. Water, approved cleaner, clear rinse, completely drain. Teresa took every step.

"And the bucket left?" asked Alberto.

"He's been left for years," said the second dealer.

"Why?"

"Because the sun is coming to the right."

Mara looked to the roof. At this time the right side was in the shadow.

"In summer," said the dealer. "Or earlier before the roof was extended."

They put the bucket where it did not block the work path. His side did not come to any leaf. The cover, marking and separation of the water types remained.

Maritza showed Abril's tin can. "And change?"

"No drinking water hygiene," Mara said.

"But important."

"Then it belongs in your sales routine, not in the water leaf."

Maritza smiled. "Finally, a form that doesn't want to own everything."

They also checked the ice water under the beverage tubs. It was not allowed to be used for rinsing the cups and not tipped into the open road if there were food there. Maritza showed the pouring out behind the market building. The route there passed two stalls and was often blocked at noon.

"Then free route is a security condition," Teresa said.

"Or we're putting a closed collection container here," Maritza said.

The dealers chose the container because the way could not be kept free at all times. On the sheet did not come a specific location, but: closed, marked, outside the clean work area; emptying at the approved outpouring. Maritza put it this morning left under the table. At the next stand could be better on the right.

An older dealer insisted that cloths were separated by color. Red for tables, blue for containers. The system worked as long as replacement was available in both colors. If only white cloths were delivered, it collapsed.

"Then the separation of purposes remains," Mara said. "The color is your implementation."

Teresa wrote: Keep cleaning cloths separate for containers and surfaces; document local marking. The dealer also voluntarily noted her colours.

In the Parque Cívico, Rogelio and three members of the Park Committee waited. Each person took their way with the responsible lantern in both directions. Lantern five got the southern entrance, the steps and the transition to the main area. Lantern two served the area at the Cultural House. Lantern

three illuminated the western path when there were stalls or evening events. Lantern one remained for the northern junction. Four and six had separate boundary areas.

"Who will turn when none of us are there?" asked Rogelio.

"Instructed parking," Alberto said.

"And if he can only look three ways out?"

"Then only the three lamps responsible. Not the others out of completeness."

The safety limits remained uniform: tested connection, closed box, no damaged lamp, safe view of steps and transitions, free escape routes. The purpose and trigger differed.

Manuel wrote at the fountain: Operation only with approved feed, safe overflow, dry walking areas outside the pool and sufficient visibility. The origin of residual moisture was not an operating parameter. It remained a test result.

Daniela removed the arrows of the central sequence from the display panel. She left inventory numbers, switch boxes, test date and the reference to the well lock.

"What about the order?" one employee asked.

"Check the fountain before it is turned on," said Manuel. "This is a security order."

"Laterns first?"

"Only if the view is necessary for the test."

"So sometimes."

"Yes."

Rogelio tried the leaves with a person who had not helped the park festival. Lucía from the library knew the paths, but not the switch boxes. She was to check lantern three only on the basis of the new document. The inventory number led her to the correct socket. The entered viewing area explained the western transition. The person responsible for the field stopped her.

"There is parking or an established committee," she said. "I'm neither of them."

"What are you doing?" Alberto asked.

"I'm reporting it's dark. I'm not switching."

The paper had not made every person capable of action. It had also established a clear limit of jurisdiction.

At the well they tested the opposite. Manuel had Rogelio name the condition of overflow, pool edge and walking surface. Rogelio could perform the visual inspection but was not allowed to open the electric box. Therefore, on the sheet operating control and electrical maintenance were separated. The same system had more than a responsible role.

After lunch they drove to the motel El Recodo. Néstor had opened the hall window. The paper strip at the edge moved outside.

"Today I wouldn't open room eight," he said.

"Why?" asked Rafael, who was to examine the later reprehensibility.

"The air is already coming out of the hallway. Room seven is empty, six occupied. No humidity, no smell."

"What if the air from eight pushes into the hallway?"

Néstor wrote on the new sheet himself: air when the air comes out of the room. Not when it comes out of the hall.

Alberto read the sentence. "Can a representative check that?"

Néstor gave Rafael a strip of paper, holding him to the door crevice and window, and the direction was visible.

Mara added: Check the room and hallway for humidity before occupied. Name smell: neutral, musty, detergent or unknown. If you have a moisture, an unknown odour or air pressure break into occupied areas, close the door, check the hall window and call Néstor.

Weekday, time and duration have been deleted.

"Who decides in neutral smell and air from the room?" Alberto asked.

"Néstor or a committed representation within the borders," Mara said.

"And if no one is committed?"

"Leave the room closed. Check the hall. Call Néstor."

It wasn't an elegant rule, it worked on a Thursday.

Rafael played the representation again. Néstor closed room eight and put the paper strip on the door so that he hardly reacted.

"Unclear," Rafael said.

"And then?" asked Néstor.

"Don't open. Check hallway windows."

The strip pulled out clearly at the window. The occupied rooms were dry, the smell neutral. Rafael would have left room eight closed and documented the condition.

"That's allowed?" he asked.

"It's the decision today," said Néstor.

They exchanged the paper strip for two light strips from the material cabinet. One was too stiff and showed nothing when the train was weak. The other reacted. After that, the sheet did not check paper but made air draught visible with a suitable light indicator. Néstor put several cut stripes in a labeled case.

"smell is harder to pass," Alberto said.

Néstor opened a cabinet with cleaning agents and let Rafael distinguish what was normally used in the motel. Muffi smell did not remain a measurement number. But unknown strong smell was a reason for breaking off, not something that had to name a representation.

In the late afternoon they met Elena in Los Pinos. Her tank was more than half full. She did not lead the group first to the roof, but showed them the news of the Municipalidad.

"I understood that, she said. "Next report at nine, even if not yet released. Not this: Supply is stabilized according to needs."

Alberto stroked according to needs. "Announced supply window with beginning and end?"

"A time span," Elena said. "And if it changes, a message before it."

"Who reports?"

Inés had prepared a contact chain: technical layer of municipal coordination, coordination to designated household contacts, feedback from households via a number. In the event of failure, responsibility went to the next named person, not to a general place.

"And if my tank remains empty at the end?" asked Elena.

"You report tank level and whether air or pressure shock occurred," Mara said. "The technical layer checks connection and pressure corridor. You don't open completely quickly."

"I wanted to hear that."

Inés ran the contact chain in a trial manner. Rafael reported a simulated delay from the pump house. Alberto called the first household contact, which reached two neighbors and confirmed within six minutes. The phone remained silent on the third. Elena knew his sister, but the group did not automatically put her into an official chain.

"He doesn't have a mobile phone at work," Elena said. "In the evening he's here."

"Then he gets the announced range on paper and if changes are made, a call to his mother's landline number, if both agree," said Inés.

They obtained consent instead of making a database of the neighbourhood. For an elderly resident, a personal notice was agreed by the designated road contact person. The chain contained several paths, but at each point one responsible person.

"How long does that last?" asked Elena.

"Until the next review in two weeks," Alberto said.

"Then the date is on it."

Teresa added it. Also a good local solution should not be unnoticed forever.

One neighbor suggested knocking three times against the tank in front of each supply window because then you could hear how much water was in it. Elena had it demonstrated. The sound was almost empty from an almost full tank. Between a quarter and a third nobody could safely distinguish.

"As a rough own observation," Mara said. "Not as a measurement value for network operation."

They didn't take the habit out of his life. They didn't include it in the company decision.

As the sun was lower, five new local leaves were on Elena's table. Their headlines were the same. Their values, words and responsible persons contradicted each other in several places. In the park a lantern could be turned on in darkness. In the motel a door could remain closed in unfavourable air. In the pump house a change required two stable measurements. In the market a cleaning had to keep a fixed order.

“It doesn't look like a method,” Alberto said.

Teresa arranged the leaves by place, not by content. “Yes. Just not like a single service.”

Manuel took his portfolio. Behind the three valve numbers he wrote in large letters: EVERYTHING OTHER.

Rafael read it. “This is for agencies?”

“This is for people who want to make a position out of three numbers,” Manuel said.

Chapter 22: What Remains

After the fourth supply window, seven of eight reported roof tanks were filled in Los Pinos within the announced time period.

The eighth was part of a house with a defective float valve. Manuel had found it the day before, the owner had it replaced. The fault lay behind the mains connection and nevertheless came into the report.

Mara had marked the eight cases on a map. Not with the same color. Four households had leftover water in the tank at the beginning of the window, three were almost empty, the clamping float blocked the inlet. Next to each point was not only full or empty, but also the inlet, audible air, highest measured pressure and time of feedback.

In the first window after the change, water had arrived at the upper end of Elena's road only after forty minutes. In the second after thirty-three, in the third after thirty-five. In the fourth it had been thirty-eight minutes. The figures did not make a uniform improvement. However, they were within an announced range, and no lower connection had exceeded its limit for this.

"If you take only the fastest value, it looks better," Alberto said.

"If you take only the slowest, worse," said Elena.

"That's why all four remain," Mara said.

Inés compared the feedback with the actual calls. Two households regularly only reported when their tank filled up audibly. One only reported interference. Elena gave a short message at the beginning and end. The different reporting methods could make three different stories out of a stable window.

"Do all now have to write twice?" asked a neighbor.

"No," said Inés. "We need a small fixed control group and a path of trouble that is accessible to everyone else."

Elena agreed to report on her road for two weeks and to report the start and the tank level. Two other households took over other altitudes. The others did not have to become unpaid measuring points.

"And if we see something that is not in your three points?" asked the neighbor.

"Then you still report it," Mara said. "The control group limits the regular query, not the reality."

"Otherwise seven out of eight looks like a web error," Elena said.

"Or eight out of eight like a success of the network," Mara said.

They stood in front of the new local leaves in the pump house. Valve one worked this morning in the middle part of its pressure corridor. Valve two was closer to its lower limit. Valve three was further open without the pump flow rising sharply. No position corresponded to the old uniform specification.

Rafael had led two night shifts alone and Manuel had called only at the final check. His records contained measurement location, time, tendency and reason of each change. Once he had not adjusted, although the upper value had been low because a rapid increase began at the lower connection.

"That was the harder decision," Manuel said.

"Nothing to do?" Alberto asked.

"Nothing to hide. He measured and informed."

The pump flow was close to the values before the pilot test. Not exact. The nightly quantities fluctuated with occupancy, tank levels and temperature. Mara did not make a smooth comparison line out of it. It marked a normal range and the few values outside of it with cause or open question.

The valve to La Hondonada was closed, and behind it a data logger was installed, recording pressure and temperature at short intervals. It was supposed to run for four weeks. The three registered sub-counters reported a few times more fuel consumption, although there was no verified hydraulic connection to the main line.

"Don't open to see if the ads disappear," Mara said.

"No one suggested that," Alberto said.

Manuel looked at the logger. "Not yet."

Rafael had checked the data logger against a reference device in the morning. Both sensors were initially separated by almost the same small amount. Manuel had the connection ventilated, waited for

a stable temperature and compared again. Afterwards the deviation remained within the device specification.

"If we had taken the first reading, we would have put in a permanent pressure residue," Rafael said.

"That's why there's an installation check," Mara said.

They sealed the case and the connection separately. A broken case seal did not automatically mean that someone had opened the valve. A broken connection seal would be a separate finding. Teresa insisted on two fields, although the digital system only required seal number.

"Otherwise, everything is the same seal," she said.

The logger also saved temperature because slow warming in an isolated line was different from a night pressure rise. There was no remote reading. Rafael would secure the data twice a week on site, each with a second person. Not because the numbers were secret, but because the path and barrier should not be controlled alone.

"Four weeks are long," Alberto said.

"For a line short," said Manuel.

"For an interim report long."

Mara did not add the promised clarification to the report, but the duration of the measurement and the next test date.

The repeated samples from Los Pinos were hygienically inconspicuous. The provincial laboratory had also completed microbiological tests: no indication of acute contamination at the tested net points. A sample from a private tank had shown an increased general germ count; the tank had been cleaned and re-sampled. The mesh sample at the same house remained unobtrusive.

Mara went through the lab sheets individually with the provincial employee. The sample chain was complete: collection, cooling, input in the laboratory and initial analysis. One bottle had arrived an hour later than the other, but still within the permitted time. The laboratory had noted the deviation without discarding the result.

"In the short report, we could all be inconspicuous," Alberto said.

"In the short report yes, Mara said. "The result remains the transport time."

The retest sample from the cleaned private tank was now also in the expected range. Elena wanted to know if this was followed by a municipal cleaning obligation for all tanks.

"Not from a case," Mara said. "But an understandable recommendation for coverage, cleaning interval and safe removal."

"Voluntary help?" asked Daniela.

Alberto pulled his face.

"Information," Mara said. "No changing items list, and public facilities have their own maintenance obligations."

Daniela nodded. "Then it must also be on who should not enter the tank himself."

The tip was bold on the sheet: cleaning only without entry or by specialists equipped for it; no person alone in a tank. The experience with the shaft south of the pump house was not limited to shafts.

"We don't say that every water is inconspicuous everywhere," Mara said. "We say what samples had what result at what points."

Inés translated the sentence into the budget statement. Elena read it before it was sent.

"Understandable," she said. "But a good result after four windows is not yet a season."

"No," Mara said.

"Then the contact chain remains."

"She stays."

In the afternoon they went to Parque Cívico. All six lanterns were on the inventory list. Each carried a maintenance date, electrical clearance, viewing area and person responsible. Two were switched off because their paths were not used that day. Four illuminated different transitions.

Rogelio led Teresa along the southern path. Lantern five pointed to the step edges. From the park centre her luminescent was hardly visible. Lantern two at the cultural house had been slightly turned, because a new sign otherwise cast shadow on the exit.

"In the old system, that would be a deviation," Alberto said.

"In the new sheet, it is the documented effect control," Teresa said.

She checked the inventory number. Same lamp, other angles, understandable reason.

On the northern path Daniela conducted a small sample of use. Two members of the park committee went in opposite directions, one with a stroller, one with an empty drink box in front of the body. Both should say where they no longer saw the next edge for sure. Their information was two meters apart.

"Who is right?" asked Rogelio.

"Both," Daniela said. "The box takes sight, the car changes the height of the view."

They turned lantern one not to an average, but so that the worse visible edge was recognizable without blinding the opposite path. Afterwards both went again. Teresa not only entered the angle, but the type of test.

The lantern four was not turned on the same evening. Their way ended on a closed lawn. Nevertheless, the inventory list remained complete and the electrical maintenance was due as with all others.

"A switched off lamp can be defective without anyone realizing it," said a member of the committee.

"That's why there is the function test outside of the audience," Manuel said. "It's not why she has to shine every night."

They set a monthly electrical test for all six and a local visual check for each lamp used. Function and operation were given separate fields.

The well area was opened again. Manuel had checked the overflow and marked a fixed safety line for wet walking areas on the basin. When water stood beyond this line, the operation was stopped and the path was closed. The running intervals depended on usage, wind and visibility.

At the edge of the basin, a dark moisture strip remained after switching off. It was narrower than on the day of the closed valve and was partly outside the point which reached the nozzles.

"Origin?" asked Rogelio.

"Open, Mara said."

"Operation?"

"Today safe. Keep watching."

Two children stopped at the fountain before marking. Her mother told them that the dark line was not the limit of water, but the limit for safe passage. One of the children asked why water did not know where to stay.

"That's why the border is for us," said Rogelio.

The fountain ran for six minutes. Wind drove individual drops westward. Manuel ended the interval before the path was wet beyond the line. At a later interval with less wind he could run longer. Both times came into the leaf; none became a new fixed duration.

Mara took a comparison measurement on the old moisture strip. The value was higher than on the dry plaster, but lower than directly after the well operation. It marked date, wind and time since switching off.

"Is it a source of origin?" asked Rogelio.

"It's a row out of it," she said.

Daniela took off the last drain arrow on the display box, which had placed wells and lanterns in a fixed order. She hung the emergency number, the test times of the connections and the position of the barrier.

"There's a lot of paper left," she said.

"More different things," Teresa said.

"It's harder to hang."

"It fits the place for that."

Shortly before sunset Alberto drove to a small pump house on the northern edge of the city. It was not part of the current Los Pinos operation, but was listed as a branch in the digital pilot register. At his inside door hung a copied old regulation: valve at thirty-five degrees; two readings; closing notice.

The employee there had never applied the instruction because his valve had a different scale.

"I thought that was for the other house," he said.

"Then why is it hanging here?" Alberto asked.

“Because it came with the pilot documents.”

Alberto did not take it without a word. He photographed the location and version, wrote the withdrawal on it and had the employee counter-signed. Then he temporarily replaced it with the unchanged safety and emergency instructions of the plant. The local sheet had to be prepared.

On the way back, he opened the digital system. The six parking lanterns remained there as a synchronized group. He could not change the status himself because the plant structure had been taken over by the regional software.

“Then we report a correction,” Teresa said.

“Processing time ten working days.”

“With date.”

Teresa had a list of other recipients of old pilot copies. One copy was on-call, one in the vehicle of Rafael, one behind the parking station counter. She did not only collect paper. Each person confirmed what version she had given and what safety information she received as a replacement.

In the standby vehicle Rafael found two versions: the first with a setpoint and a later with the cut off word “Bausst”. He had taken the upper one depending on the shift.

“That explains why I said setpoint on Tuesday,” he said.

“And it shows that withdrawal is more than a display,” Alberto said.

The old copy at the remote pump house did not bear a version number. Teresa compared paper and printing errors and assigned them to the earliest edition. She wrote down the assignment with uncertainty, instead of placing a number on the sheet afterwards.

Alberto created the process, added the six local sheets and put the wrong group status on check. The lanterns did not have to be operated synchronously for ten days just because the database was slower.

In the evening they met Elena again. Her tank flow was quiet. The swimmer closed without hitting the pipe. Two neighbors confirmed that their tanks had been filled in the announced window. A third household had seen the message too late; therefore, Inés added a call for residents without regular news access.

“Now it's better,” Elena said.

“Stable?” Mara asked.

“For this week.”

“That's enough for the next decision.”

At the end of the day, the pump house had laboratory reports, four supply protocols, the seal number for the separate branch and the long-term measurement order. No document explained why Hondonada counters still showed consumption. However, they proved that the supply of Los Pinos was no longer acutely endangered.

Mara called the mayor's office.

“The operational emergency is over,” she said. “The supply window can continue regularly. Samples remain in the intended control program.”

“And the La Hondonada process?” asked the office manager.

“Stay open. The branch remains temporarily separate, the logger runs, and a visit is only made after occupational safety clearance.”

Mara didn't cut through the process, she just cut out the word emergency.

Chapter 23: The Houses Without Houses

The release for La Hondonada consisted of seven pages and a card that was still wrong.

Mara had not straightened the danger points to fit the map. The possible shaft behind the first connection had been exposed, locked off and secured with a fixed cover. An occupational safety group had measured the air. In the shaft, which was closer to the main line, the oxygen concentration remained too low; it was not opened and was outside the inspection. Safe corridors were marked for the rest of the terrain.

“Abortion in case of damaged marking, unstable soil, unknown gas value, pressure on an unreleased valve or loss of visual connection”, Rafael read.

“And with Garúa, when the markings are no longer recognizable,” Mara said.

Javier looked to heaven. “Then we have until afternoon.”

“Maybe,” Daniela said.

They stood at the end of the fortified road southeast of Los Pinos. The Pacific was behind them in the west, not visible, but as a bright surface in the sky. In the east stood the dry slopes of Cerro Dormido. Before them lay foundations, curbs, sand and the low earth walls of La Hondonada.

Each had a task. Mara performed inspection, line testing and samples. Manuel only checked the approved fittings. Teresa assigned numbers, labels and file covers. Inés compared the three connection accounts with the counter and property data. Rafael conducted measuring points and times. Javier checked paths, lanes and safe return. Daniela documented visible traces of use without automatically assigning them to an installation.

Before the first step, they not only signed the attendance list. Mara had each person repeat his own demolition ground. Manuel called pressure on an unreleased armature. Teresa lost sight of the group. Inés damaged corridor marking. Rafael alarm of the gas meter. Javier unstable way back. Daniela a usage track that was only accessible outside the safe area.

“A trail is no reason to leave the corridor,” she said.

“Right,” Mara said.

The rescue plan was in the vehicle and a second copy was at the technical control station. Javier had confirmed the coordinates of the access before departure by telephone. The next ambulance needed 18 minutes from Los Pinos under normal conditions. Therefore, the clearance did not include any work in which a fall into a shaft could only be answered after eighteen minutes.

Manuel started the gas meter outdoors and documented the zero test. Teresa photographed the display not as proof of the whole terrain, but for the condition and time of the device. Mara checked the wind direction. The Garúa was still far away, but the slight air draught already came from the west.

Seven people went in. A person in the technical control center knew when to return. La Hondonada did not less open. The visit became responsible.

“When we see the same thing, we still write it separately,” Teresa said.

“And if we see different things?” asked Javier.

“Then even more so.”

They wore helmets, solid shoes, gloves and warning vests. Manuel had gas meter, voltage tester and tool with him. The tool remained sealed until a concrete release was available. Mara wore sample containers and a portable measuring device. Teresa had two cameras so that a device error did not make a memory of a visit.

The first safe corridor followed the old lanes. They had been partly blown away since the visit at the edge but not disappeared. Javier's wooden sticks were still standing. One had fallen down. He did not erect it until Teresa had photographed location and condition.

“Wind, said Inés.”

“Or a tire,” Javier said. “The sand is higher on the south side. I can't separate it.”

They left both possibilities.

Twelve and fourteen posts were the same numbers as before. The broken piece between them was no longer lying in the sand sideways. It had been placed at the edge of the road, the metal plate pointing upwards. Under a layer of sand the number thirteen could now be read.

"This is the order of the day," said Inés.

"The post sequence," Teresa said. "Not the houses."

Behind the twelve posts was a rectangular foundation. In the plan there was a twelve parcel of house. Behind fourteen there was a concrete slab, which more suited to a road. Column thirteen pointed to an area without foundation. The numbers had places but no houses.

Daniela found fourteen remains of a thin red thread on the posts. He was wrapped around an edge and was declared in one place. "Marking or packaging."

Rafael noted material and location. Teresa photographed. No one called him a sign.

The access to the planned park was secured by a temporary railing. Behind it were the six planting pits in two staggered rows. Since the first visit, garbage had been removed from two pits. The dry grass tufts were still standing. Cable pipes from the concrete protruded on four square foundations.

Manuel tested without any stress from the outside. No voltage. Two pipes were closed with old caps, one with mortar, the fourth open and filled with sand. The delivery note from Depósito Norte called two weatherproof switches.

"Delivery, not built in," said Teresa.

"Or built in and removed again," said Manuel.

"No traces on the foundations?" Mara asked.

Manuel pointed to two holes on the western base. The edges were weathered, but not enough to safely limit their age. The distance was suitable for several common enclosures.

"Possible assembly", he said. "No assignment to the supplied switch."

A thin black tube ran in a planting pit. The former loose piece had disappeared. The now visible tube sat deeper in the ground and led to the vertical irrigation pipe, which had been closed with a plastic cup the last time. The cup was lying next to it, in two brittle parts. On the tube there was a new grey cap.

New in this case was: not brittle, not futile and available in the current hardware market program. It did not mean that it had been put on yesterday.

"Maintenance," Alberto did not say, because he was not there.

Daniela said: "Someone has made something fitting."

Teresa took the phrase.

Between the planting pits they found two recessed metal casings. The park plan showed water points there, the procurement bill two fittings. One sleeve was completely filled with sand. In the other one was a cut piece of plastic tube, whose inner edge was cleaner than the outer surface.

Manuel measured the diameter without pulling it out. It was a common irrigation coupling, not the pressure reducers of the house connections. Teresa compared the position with the calculation. The distances were only correct if you rotated the plan by a few degrees.

"To the north?" Rafael asked.

"After the built curb edge," Teresa said. "This is not a direction of the sky."

Mara had both reference systems included. The park could have been adapted to existing obstacles in the area. It could also have been built after another sketch. The offset planting pits were not a bad copy of a straight line as long as the plan was missing.

Daniela found shoe prints of various sizes at a pit edge. Some were softly blown, one sharp. The sharp print overlaid one of the tire tracks.

"After the follower," said Javier.

"Or after an older track that the wind has similarly exposed, Daniela said."

She photographed overlay and depth. The ascent itself did not create any new prints there; the corridor was two meters away.

Manuel was not allowed to open the cap. The irrigation line was not pressure-free verified. He only checked the seat from outside. On the edge was glued bright sealing tape, cleanly cut off. The sand immediately below was undisturbed.

"Younger than the tube," he said. "That's all I can date."

The first of the three connection sockets was twenty meters further, behind the secured shaft edge. On the visit to the edge they had only seen cap and silver sealing wire. Now a freed bridge led up to him. The pipe carried a punched number that matched Inés' first account.

"Connection A-", she said. "'In the digital system residential plot thirty-one. In the old register public water place."

"What use is billed?" Mara asked.

"Household, low-tariff."

"Owners?"

"Municipalidad in the first version. Later field blank."

Manuel checked the fitting. The cap was secured with a wire that did not match the old seals of the Municipalidad. Under the mother sat fresh white sealing material. A screw on the holding bracket was galvanized and in today's usual size. The other three screws were corroded.

"It was moved, he said."

"When?" Teresa asked.

"After the old screw was already corroded."

"This is not a date."

"No."

According to the tracking device, the line behind connection A led initially to the east, not to the northwest, to the documented branch. After about twelve meters, the signal lost on a wide concrete slab.

Mara had two new measuring points set, the distance from the plan was almost nine meters.

"Card mistakes?" Rafael asked.

"Or building deviation," Mara said. "Or another line."

They did not open connection A. The branch was temporarily separated, but the local tail showed a small residual pressure that fluctuated over several minutes. That was enough to keep the armature closed. Mara did not take any sample from an unknown connection.

"The counter reports zero yesterday," said Inés.

"The pressure doesn't go to zero today," Rafael said.

Both values came in the same line, with different sources.

The second connection was at the border of the planned school district. The post with a Z.E. and the file number was still standing. Its blue color was matter than on the last visit, but it remained strong under an edge. Beside it small concrete stamps ran in a line that according to the educational office plan should have formed the front of a school building.

No building had been built. Two foundations were only a few centimeters from the ground. In one cut-off reinforcement rods with old protective caps. The caps were cracked. On the other was a new washer.

Daniela photographed them. "May have fallen from a machine."

Javier pointed to narrow tire tracks. "A small trailer has been driving here in the last few days. The same damaged profile edge as on the outer road."

"To what?" Mara asked.

The tracks ran to the B and further south. They ended at a stronger Sandruck, where the profile was no longer drawn. Not at a house, not at a pit.

Connection B carried a number from the second account. Its fitting was almost completely shipped. Only the upper square was free. No fresh sealing material, no clean movement location. The positioning impulse followed the plan first and then turned off towards Canal Seco.

"Back?" Rafael asked.

Mara directed the map. The Seco Canal was located west and a little north of this point. The line ran northwest in the first section. Whether it reached the channel could not be said without further authorised location.

"Apparently towards Canal Seco, she said. "'Not as an end to enter."

No pressure was measurable at the connection itself. Manuel was allowed to release the outer protective cap because the safety clearance expressly covered this point and the line had been tested without pressure on both sides. Under the cap the connection was dry. The seal was old, cracked and unusable. Mara took a sterile swab, not a water sample.

"Counter B reported consumption the day before yesterday," said Inés.

"There is no water on this stub," Manuel said.

"Today by this time, Mara added."

Rafael put an acoustic sensor on the exposed outside of the line. The noise was weak and irregular. It could have come from a remote pump, a loose cap or vibrations in the ground. When Javier started the vehicle at the outer path, the level changed. They waited until the engine was out again.

After that, a shorter knock remained. Manuel compared it to the known main-strand signal and found no sure match.

"Not active in the report line," Mara said. "Acoustic signal at the measuring point influenced by ambient noise."

Inés checked whether the counter had changed during the measurement. No. Five minutes later, the system reported a small jump, although there was still no pressure at the connection.

"Time delay of transmission?" asked Rafael.

"Possibly," said Inés. "I'm calling for the raw time stamps."

The display did not make them reopen the dry valve.

It closed the cap with new documented seal material and a numbered seal. The maintenance they produced themselves should not be confused with an unknown one later on.

At noon they ate in the shadow of Javier's vehicle. No one sat on a foundation. Teresa put the card on a box and complained the corners with four unopened sample bottles.

"A connection shows pressure, one not," said Rafael. "Both report consumption."

"Three report consumption," said Inés.

"We haven't seen the third one yet."

"The system is."

Javier bit his bread. "The system seems to be faster."

Daniela looked at the foundations. Some of them looked like house floor plans from their place. When she got up, two disappeared behind flat earth walls and others joined.

"How many houses were planned?" she asked.

Teresa put three documents side by side. "Eighteen in the property plan, twelve in the water register, twenty-four house numbers in the award list."

"And built?"

"Fundaments are not houses."

"So no number."

"We can have a number of visible foundations at the end. No number of houses built."

The third connection was located south of the dotted border on the old plan, but within a later maintenance sketch. The safe corridor led along a curb that ended after three meters in the sand. Behind it followed further curbs at uneven intervals. They did not form a finished road, but a curve.

Javier measured the path. From connection B to C it was on the plan one hundred and ten meters. His roller wheel showed a hundred and forty-eight along the safe corridor. The direct laser distance was one hundred and nineteen.

"What distance is wrong?" Inés asked.

"No one has to be wrong," Mara said. "They measure different paths. But none exactly corresponds to the plan."

Connection C was in a flat valley. Around it the ground was darker, although no water came out. The cap was old. However, the handle of the armature had a bare spot as if it had been moved. Under one mother sat red seal tape that Manuel had never seen in San Desvelo at municipal work.

"They sell white and yellow in Grifo," Javier said. "Red is available in Puerto Esperanza."

"Or of a box brought with you," Daniela said.

Teresa documented color, material and comparison, not the shopping location.

After pressure testing, connection C could be briefly sampled. Manuel only opened up to the released position. First came air, then a small amount of clear water. Mara rejected the first quantity, measured field parameters and filled two sterile bottles. Conductivity and temperature were closer to the narrow line in Canal Seco than on the main strand, but the differences were too small and the measuring times were too different for an assignment of origin. Free chlorine was not detectable.

"Drinking water?" Rafael asked.

"Unknown origin. Not released," Mara said.

Manuel closed the valve, the new seal got number, time and two signatures.

The tracking device showed that the line of C led deeper into La Hondonada. It did not return where the archive plan drew the collection line. After thirty meters, the signal lost under a series of foundations.

"Crafting up?" asked Inés.

"Not in this effort," Mara said. "Ownness, freedom of management and archaeological concerns are unresolved. We have a deviation, no excavation order."

On the eastern edge they found a low platform, which was called a possible technical room in the school plan. The door had never been used. Four anchor bolts were laid in the concrete. One wore fresh grinding marks. Next to the wall stood an empty plastic bottle whose label was not yet completely out of print.

Daniela photographed the bottle and the sanding track separately. "The bottle proves a visitor."

"Not the same as the screw," Teresa said.

"And the grinding track proves a movement on the bolt," Manuel said. "Not what was attached."

The different sentences did not fit into a story. They fit into a protocol.

Before leaving the eastern edge, Teresa counted the material references from the earlier files. Four lantern foundations corresponded to the paid partial position, but no mounted lantern was available. Two possible water points were suitable for procurement, not clearly to the location drawing. The school post bore the correct number, but no opened school building existed. Three connection numbers matched three accounts; routes of administration and usage did not fit.

"Four hits, four contradictions," Rafael said.

"More than four of both," Teresa said. "Not counting as if they were couples."

Mara also took a soil moisture sample outside the possible outlet on the darker bottom around connection C and a control sample further up. Both remained separate from the water bottles. A later similar conductivity would not prove that the water came out of the ground or the pipe. It would only allow a comparison.

The sample box was now heavier. Their knowledge was also. Both remained transportable because each vessel had a unique number.

At about three o'clock the Garúa came from the west. First the sky lost only its bright edge. Then the humidity lay on the darker surfaces. Mara checked the view to the corridor markings. It was still sufficient, but the group started the planned return journey.

Some foundations became more visible on damp sand. Their edges were darker. Others disappeared because concrete and surroundings assumed the same tone. The number of visible rectangles changed without anything being built or removed.

Daniela walked no more than five meters from the corridor when she found the set. He stood on a low concrete post behind the planned park, just above the ground.

I was here next week.

The letters were not written with pencil. They were drawn as dark lines into an old light color layer, perhaps with graphite or a soft metal. Water and sand had washed out the edges. Lichen sat in two recesses. The surface looked much longer weathered than the set on the button in Rosa's courtyard.

Daniela stopped at the corridor marking. "Teresa."

Teresa came with the second camera. She photographed first the whole post, then set, scale, surface and environment. Mara checked the safe stand. No one touched the font.

"Your handwriting?" Rafael asked.

Daniela looked long enough to not only react. "Some letters resemble her. That I don't. At the word week I don't know."

"Did you write the sentence here?" Inés asked.

"No."

Teresa wrote: Statement of the present Daniela: not attached by her to this place. Scripture similarity not professionally examined. Material and age unexplained; visible weathering documented.

"In the courtyard he was under a button," Manuel said.

"This one is on a post," Teresa said.

“The same wording,” Rafael said.

“That's also coming in.”

Daniela took a picture herself. She didn't stand next to the sentence and did not let her take him.

The Garúa became denser. Mara gave the return order. Not because of the writing. The next mark was only weak from the prescribed distance.

They went back on the same shared corridor. Javier didn't count steps, but people at each checkpoint. Seven at the C. Seven junction at the school post. Seven at the planned park. Seven behind the outer border.

At the outer checkpoint, Manuel reported the gas meter. The values remained within the release during the inspection. Mara did not close the work sheet immediately. First they checked helmets, tools, seal residues and contamination-free packaging. Two used pairs of gloves came into a separate bag. The red sealing tape from connection C had not been taken as a sample; it remained in place and on the photos.

Javier called the control center. “Group completely out. No injury, no rescue operation.”

“Result?” asked the voice on the phone.

“This comes in the Minutes.”

It was not his job to put seven different observations in the driver's seat into one set.

Teresa checked cameras and maps. Inés had assigned three account numbers to three physical studs, but no clear connection to the main strand. Manuel had seen an older dry, a younger maintained and an unmistakably moving armature. Rafael had measured pressure in one place, no pressure on the second and water of unknown origin on the third. Daniela had found traces of usage that did not prove the same person and not the same time. Javier had measured paths whose lengths differed from the plans according to the actual course of the process.

Mara had more data than she did in the morning.

She took off the gloves on the vehicle and checked that every sample was sealed. The seal numbers were correct. No tools were missing. The safety sheet contained no incident.

Behind them, the Garúa made the foundations more visible and incomprehensible at the same time. The post with Daniela's sentence disappeared first in the light grey because it was lower than the others.

They left on schedule.

Chapter 24: Provisional

Alberto didn't just pull the mandatory sheets back, he gave her a number for her withdrawal.

On the last afternoon of Mara's order, six copies of the decision were placed in the meeting room of the Municipalidad. One went to the technical services, one to the Park Committee, one to the Motel El Recodo, one to the regional office, one to the pilot file and one to the stock of repealed instructions.

"Why does an order cancel get its own inventory?" asked Javier, who had come to get Mara's suitcase.

"So that she will not return as a valid copy later," Teresa said.

"They keep them so that they are gone."

"It is kept to prove that it no longer applies."

Javier looked at Mara. "This is a complete answer."

"Just not a short one," she said.

The decision called each version individually. Pump house leaf with fixed valve position. Parking leaf with common switching time and marked axis. Motel leaf with Thursday, 17:30 and 12 minutes. Voluntary household help with daily change sequence. Next to each number was the withdrawal date and replacement: local operating protocols, if already released; otherwise existing safety and emergency rules until local processing.

Inventories remained valid. Maintenance records remained valid. Measurement series, laboratory reports, seal numbers and hazard assessments remained valid. The six lanterns remained six lanterns. Three Hondonada accounts remained three unexplained accounts.

Alberto had opened the digital pilot register in the morning. There, there were buttons for successfully completed and aborted. None fit. Aborted would have marked the measurement data as incomplete attempt. Successfully completed the mandatory sheets would have saved as valid result.

"Then we need a third status," Mara said.

"The system needs the regional office for this."

Teresa temporarily put an end to local versions. Alberto sent the amendment with the withdrawal decision. Until it was recorded, he placed a blocking note on each old version and linked the new protocols individually.

"Can anyone overlook the lockout?" asked Javier.

"Yes," Alberto said.

"That was fast."

"That's why we also move in the paper copies and inform the services. No system replaces the withdrawal at the places."

Rafael had left his vehicle copies. Three copies were found at the park, one with a coffee spot and no back. Only Néstor's envelope was available in the motel. The voluntary household help could not be fully recalled because their recipients had not been detected. Radio Desvelo sent the hint twice that the order was no longer recommended.

The withdrawal was itself an impact control. It showed where the administration knew who owned a sheet, and where not.

"Signatures," Alberto said.

Mara signed for the professional withdrawal. Alberto for the municipal implementation. Manuel confirmed the withdrawal in the pump house, Rogelio for the park, Néstor for the motel. Rosa did not sign because the household help had not been a binding requirement. Teresa instead documented when the remaining copies were removed at the information booth and the well-known recipient was notified.

"The wrong help was voluntary," Daniela said.

"The effect is not necessarily," Rosa said on the phone.

Teresa also included this sentence as a note, but not in the decision.

After that, they opened Mara's final report. He had eighteen pages, nine attachments and no headline with solution.

The first section described the order: recording pressure ratios, causing samples, stabilizing supply and recommending a reasonable operating mode. The second separated secured results from open assignments.

The supply of the upper connections of Los Pinos had stabilised after returning to local pressure areas. Pressure shocks had not reappeared in the observed windows. Pump flow and measured pressure tendencies were again in the documented operating areas. The announced contact chain worked over several supply windows.

The safety was also ensured: Repeated mesh samples did not indicate acute microbiological or chemical contamination at the tested sites. A conspicuous private tank sample had been processed by cleaning and re-testing; the associated mesh sample had remained inconspicuous.

The southeastern, unverified branch was closed, sealed and provided with a long-term logger. Its separation had not clearly ended the messages of the three Hondonada accounts. The visit had confirmed three physical connectors, but no complete connection between them, the digital accounts and the main line.

Mara had provided each secured set with the source. Stabilized meant four observed supply windows, not a permanent guarantee. Reduced meant no renewed reported pressure surges during this period, not their physical impossibility. Separately designated valve, seal and measuring location, not all unknown lines southeast of the city.

The case officer of their regional department took part in the meeting by telephone and asked if the original difference was explained.

“No,” Mara said.

“Can we evaluate them as a result of false valve positions?”

“The fixed position has made the supply measurable worse. It does not explain the three undercounters or any previous balance sheet difference.”

“And La Hondonada as a leak zone?”

“Not documented. We have water of unknown origin on a connection and a line in the Seco Canal. No proven mesh leak that connects these quantities.”

At the other end, it remained silent for a short time, and then the clerk said: “This will give a lot of open points in an overview.”

“Yes.”

“But Los Pinos is supplied.”

“Stabilized, with further control program.”

“I write stabilized.”

Mara asked him to put the time period in place.

The reason for the pressure shift remained open. Legal and technical status of the three connections remained open. When and by whom individual valves had been maintained in La Hondonada. The origin of the water at connection C and the narrow line in the Seco Canal remained open.

“Do you write room eight in?” Nestor asked.

He came for the final meeting at the motel and sat at the end of the table.

“In the facility about the accommodation operation,” Mara said. “Humidity, meter display, line inspection, occupancy deviation and the new local rule. Not as a cause of the network.”

“Good.”

“The counter goes to the test.”

“It is already expanded and sealed.”

“Then the seal number comes in.”

Teresa added them.

The parking section did not say that less lighting was better. He said that areas of vision, paths and responsible persons had to be checked separately. Full inventorying had allowed repairs and safe connections. The common alignment and rigid circuitry had deteriorated transitions and had been terminated.

“The regional body will ask for a transferable method,” Alberto said.

“She gets one,” Mara said.

The recommendation contained the same levels as on the new site sheets: unchangeable safety limit, local observation, permissible range, triggers for a change, responsible person and termination and notification. The separation of these levels was transferable. Values, angles, times and sequences had to be established and verified locally.

"No universal rule," Alberto said.

"A universal rule would be a new attitude," Mara said.

"Then I write in the cover letter: Structure transferable, content related to location."

"With instruction and impact control."

"Of course."

Teresa leafed over La Hondonada to the plant. She had prepared a new process for the visit. In the field Reference process was: not found.

"Can you create a continuous process without opening?" Manuel asked.

"The system requires an opening date."

"What do you take?"

"No one from the old records. That would be invented."

She had spoken to the archive supervisor. The new process was opened as inventory clarification with current date. The title read: La Hondonada – continuous technical and administrative assignment; historical opening process not found. All older files remained connected by references.

"Then it's a new beginning," Javier said.

"For the file," said Teresa. "Not for the place."

She took the crooked work card off the wall. Transparent foils lay above it: three connecting positions, safe corridors, planned school, park, line locations and the post with Daniela's set. No foil corrected the map below. Teresa rolled everything together and put it in a wide shell.

"Do you want a copy?" she asked Mara.

Mara looked at the many lines that didn't run together at the edge. "No. The map is part of the ongoing process."

"You get the measuring points in the report."

"I need them."

Teresa also produced a checksum of the digital files and a directory of photos. The recordings of the Hondonada-Pfosten with Daniela's sentence were taken into the technical inventory, not into a personal file. Daniela's statement remained as recorded statement, not as attribution.

"And if anyone wants to compare the Scriptures later?" Daniela asked.

"Then it takes a well-founded assignment and suitable material," Teresa said. "Not your schoolbook out of curiosity."

Daniela kept the photos from the button in her own secured folder. The button itself remained under documented storage in the yard until it was clear whether it was needed for a material inspection. Nobody took it as a souvenir.

The crooked card got a list of its slides outside. Teresa noted which line was from which year. So the card didn't get any more correct. She became more understandable wrong.

She signed the final report. Her signature did not explain San Desvelo. She limited what her department claimed technically and what measures had to continue.

The mayor's office accepted the report. The mayor thanked the working group in a brief meeting, in which he took part by video switch, without camera. He did not defend the pilot attempt and made the withdrawal no defeat.

"The regional office gets the report today," he said. "What do we say publicly?"

Elena was present as a representative from Los Pinos. "That the supply is more stable. Not that it is solved forever."

Rogelio added: "The park is open and the lamps are operated according to their paths."

Manuel said: "No one opens the Hondonada branch."

Teresa said: "The old mandatory sheets are no longer valid."

The mayor looked at Mara. "And the rehearsals?"

"At the tested network points without indication of acute contamination. Further controls are ongoing."

He repeated the sentence slowly enough that Alberto could write it down exactly.

After the meeting, the group did not go to dinner together. Manuel had to go to the pump house for the delivery. Elena went with Inés to Los Pinos. Rogelio had an evening check at the park. Daniela brought her mother the final message for the household help. The conclusion consisted of several ways.

Mara accompanied Manuel to the pump house. Rafael took over the evening shift. The three local valve blades hung on the wall, each with its own area and demolition criteria. The folder with EVERY OTHER was in the cupboard, not as an official title, but as Manuel's warning on the lid.

"Do you call when the upper value falls?" Manuel asked.

"I first check the measuring point and tendency," Rafael said. "Then the contact chain."

"And who?"

Rafael called on-call, not Mara.

"Well, she said."

Elena waited outside, and her tank book contained the last four windows and the next check date.

"When the water comes next week, I'll report it," she said.

"That's how it should be."

"And when everything goes, I still report the control values."

"That's how it should be."

In the park they met Rogelio only briefly. Lantern five illuminated the steps. The eastern one stayed out because the path was closed. Rogelio pointed to the inventory list in the box. "All six there."

"And not all of them," Mara said.

"I'm writing this without explanation."

Mara went with Teresa until the end of the Archivo.

"You have your report," Teresa said.

"You have your open process."

"Continued."

"That sounds better."

"It's more accurate."

Teresa gave her a copy of the final report and the receipt confirmation. No card. Between the plants, the planned and actual parking party switching list were still separate.

"What was left of it when it was transferred," Mara said.

"And what we had to bring back."

They didn't say goodbye forever. Teresa said she would send the lab test of Connection C. Mara said she would pass on regional feedback. Both called responsibilities and no promises.

The reception of the television was at the Motel El Recodo. A bus driver drank coffee from a cardboard cup. The Monteurin from room six had left; Néstor had closed her line. There was no warning sign outside the door.

Mara carried her suitcase up the stairs and checked room seven one last time. She had left nothing in the closet. In the bathroom the tap was tight. The frayed towel was folded on the plastic chair.

The damp line had disappeared in the hallway. A matte edge remained on a tile before its threshold, only visible when the light from the grifo fell through the window. Before room eight the floor was dry.

Mara opened a gap in the hall window. The light strip of paper in the labeled envelope moved outside. Néstor had entered on the new local sheet in the morning: room eight closed; corridor neutral; occupied rooms dry; no ventilation required.

On the table in room seven was the first back of her order with the four questions: Where does the pressure fall? When does it fall? What amount is actually missing? What is considered normal here?

She was able to answer the first two more precisely. The third only partially. To the fourth there were now several local answers. Mara put the sheet on the final report, not as an appendix, but as a personal note.

Mara didn't measure the edge, she looked at it and went on.

Néstor waited downstairs with the occupancy book. Mara put the key of room seven on the table.

"Warm water was more reliable in the morning," she said.

"That's not in the brochure."

"There is a brochure?"

"No."

He entered the departure date and time into her line. Then he drew a single straight line in the field Stay finished and signed. The pale second line, in which Mara had occupied room eight at the same time, was marked with the earlier note: no actual occupancy; origin unexplained. Néstor did not close it as a stay because none had taken place.

The next regular line in the book remained free.

"The room remains closed?" Mara asked.

"Until I have a reason to open it."

"Thursday?"

"Sometimes it's a reason to look at the calendar."

Javier took the suitcase to Colectivo. He did not drive Mara to Puerto Esperanza himself because he had to bring a load of chairs back from the park. The detour south was not planned for the night bus anyway.

"The driver knows the road," he said.

"I hope so."

"He also knows the places that are not road."

The night driver was the same man who had brought Mara to San Desvelo. Above his mirror was the rosary with the copper wire. The image of the Señor de los Milagros broke loose at the same corner. On the windshield stood LAS PALMERAS, CENTRO and EL ALTO. The free space below was left.

"Puerto Esperanza", Mara said.

"Today," said the driver.

"That would be helpful."

He took her suitcase as if he didn't hear the answer.

In the colectivo, a woman with two shopping bags, a young man in work clothes and an older couple holding a pot plant between her feet. Mara took the window seat again. The window still didn't close completely.

The driver checked tyres, doors and two luggage belts before the departure. At the last belt he pulled after, although the suitcase had not moved. His routine was even but not blind. When a later passenger brought a canister, he did not put it in the designated free space, but on the other side of the axle and lashed it new.

"Not according to plan?" Mara asked.

"After weight, he said."

She did not write down the sentence. Not every real local decision had to be part of her report.

Néstor was standing under the lamp of the reception. Across from Grifo Rosa wrote numbers on a block. A truck waited at the outer pump. The motel looked like a cheap purpose building on a road because it was exactly that.

When the bus left, Nestor raised a hand. Mara lifted hers.

They passed Centro. Four lanterns were burning in Parque Cívico. None pointed in the same direction. The southern illuminated its steps, another the access to the cultural house. The fountain was not visible from this distance. People sat on two benches.

The third one, who had flickered at Mara's arrival, was repaired, which said nothing about the city. It meant that someone had repaired a lamp.

A black tube was placed over the floor at Las Palmeras. This time a small cable bridge passed over it and the Colectivo didn't have to drive it flat. Mara did not look back if he was getting up behind the bus.

Further south Mara heard the sound of a pump through the window gap. Shortly after, Los Pinos had a hollow, irregular blow that she knew in the meantime: water fell into a not yet full roof tank. A second tank started further back. The noises were not in the beat.

Her phone showed a message from Elena: Window started. Pressure calm. Fill two tanks.

Mara only replied: Get.

The Colectivo went on the road to Puerto Esperanza. At the edge of the Seco Canal, the driver took his foot off the gas because the asphalt had been bagged there. The spotlights crossed over concrete, sand and small flags of the measuring points.

There was water between them.

The line was narrower than when you went on. In some places it reflected the headlights, in others it was only a dark edge. It wasn't enough for one stream. For a clear flow direction it was also barely enough.

Mara did not turn to the source. She did not take the copy of her report out of her backpack. Therein stood the measuring points, the open assignments and the limits of what she could say.

Behind the bus, more roof tanks began to fill up in Los Pinos. Before him, the road led to Puerto Esperanza.

The narrow water line passed the edge of San Desvelo.