

A dark, atmospheric photograph of a snowy street at night. In the background, city lights and a church spire are visible through the haze. In the foreground, a person's leg in a dark blue winter boot is visible, standing on the snow. The overall mood is cold and mysterious.

BILLY CURRY

**NO TIME  
FOR  
POSTCARDS**

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Also by Billy Curry

*Unlonely Planet*

The book is a work of fiction. Any referent historical event, real people, or real places are used fictitiously. Other names, characters, places, and events are products of the author's imagination, and any resemblances to actual events, or places or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental or good luck.

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# CHAPTER 1

## Tuesday

John stands with a backpack on in the large modern airport terminal, scanning the departure schedule. There are morning flights to Rome, Barcelona, London, and Moscow. John notices a beautiful blonde lady pass. She gives a slight smile, enough to catch his attention.

*I love travelling, he thinks to himself, there's no schedule and no demands.* John, dressed in well-worn jeans and a wrinkled navy shirt, strolls to the British Airways counter and buys a ticket to Heathrow.

John prepares to pass through security. He takes off his belt and places the contents of his pockets into a plastic container for the X-ray machine: phone, American passport, plane ticket, and wallet. After passing through security, John heads towards the departure gate. He stands in line with 15 people, anxiously waiting to hand

over his boarding pass. Children laugh in a nearby lounge and families stand in groups saying their goodbyes. John shuffles along the queue, keeping his head down.

*I enjoy meeting new people.*

A tall, blonde, muscular man in his mid-30s, dressed head to toe in tight black clothing, crashes through a young family of four as he hastily heads down the corridor towards the boarding gate. The husband of the family yells out in protest.

*But not this guy... He wants to kill me!*

John inches nearer to the departure gate, but the line is moving too slowly. He looks around and sees a bathroom behind him. It's a possible escape route, but he would miss his flight. John wipes perspiration from his top lip. Two airline staff members casually feed boarding passes into a machine. Next to them is a newspaper stand. John walks to the stand, takes a German paper, reenters the line and buries his face in the pages.

*I haven't done anything for him to want to kill me. Well... nothing that was my fault.*

## Chapter 2

### Two days earlier – Sunday

It was late in the afternoon when a new white Volkswagen Golf arrived at the Hamburg Hostel. The car had been pushed to its limits over a four-hour journey on the autobahn from Berlin. The young female receptionist noticed the two casually dressed men through the window as they stepped from their hired car and slung their backpacks over their shoulders.

John pulled a small camera from the front pocket of his jeans and yelled, “Hey, Blake!”

Blake flipped around; John took a photo of him in front of the building, and then they entered the hostel.

“*Guten tag*,” John stated as he approached the desk inside.

“Herzliches Willkommen. Kann ich Ihnen helfen?”

asked the receptionist.

“Ahhh...*Sprechen Sie Englisch?*” replied John as he returned the camera to his pocket. His German vocabulary had now been almost exhausted.

“No, but can I help you?” the receptionist smiled with a German accent.

John looked to Blake. He smiled back. A joking receptionist had to be a sign of a good hostel. It was all they had to go on, given they had done minimal research into the town, its attractions and accommodations.

“Great!” John said. “Do you have a room for two? We—”

“With separate beds? We’re NOT together!” Blake interrupted.

The receptionist was momentarily amused; she then shifted her attention to her computer screen, “We have only two beds available: one single room and one bed in a bunkroom. It’s the weekend and we are usually full.”

The men looked at each other.



“We’ll take them,” they responded in tandem.

“So, your names please?”

“John Dixon.”

“And Blake Simpson. Do you have a bar here? I need a drink,” Blake asked.

“Of course, but I need to see your passports first,” the receptionist replied.

The men pushed their passports over the desk. Blake’s was Australian; it showed his place of birth was Perth. John’s was American, birthplace New York. They were both born in 1992, making them 24. The receptionist started to populate the booking form.

“I can split the fee between two?” asked the receptionist.

“Sure,” replied Blake.

“Okay... that’s 30 euros each.”

The receptionist printed two receipts and placed them on the counter. She reached into a drawer, and put two red keys on the desk: one was engraved with a five,

the other with an eight. Each had a hostel badge attached with a small round metal ring. As John reached for a hostel business card, the receptionist pointed to the key with the number five on it.

“This is for the single room.”

John and Blake looked at each other then started a game of Rock-Paper-Scissors.

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Blake walked into the spacious dorm room with his receipt in his mouth. Inside, he noticed two bunks on either side of the room. Suspended between them was a travelers' clothesline covered with several G-strings, bras, and socks. He took the receipt from his mouth. His frown turned to a smile as he realised he had the better deal. With no one else in sight, he put his backpack on the floor and moved towards the centre of the well-kept room to get a closer view of the underwear. The underwear was lacy: one black set, one pink, and one red pair. Blake saw a size tag on the black pair.

“Hello, ladies,” Blake called to himself.

He moved in for a closer look.

“Hello?” said a female voice behind him.

Blake jumped. Two young, attractive women stood in the doorway.

“Well, hello,” he responded calmly, as he stepped forward to greet them. They introduced themselves as Jessica and Tori.

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In the single room, John had taken a long shower. He looked through the window to the garden outside as he combed his hair. He filled his pockets: wallet, phone, camera and business card. The receipt, room key, car keys and passport he left on the dark wooden desk near the window. John removed the hostel badge from the keyring and placed the key in the back pocket of his jeans. He took the receipt from the table and threw it in the small bin. John put on a white T-shirt then headed towards the hostel bar.

Blake was at the bar with the two girls. It seemed they had been there for a while given the number of empty beer glasses and the friendly conversation. The girls were dressed for the evening, with mid-length skirts, plunging tops, and carefree smiles. Blake wore a dark shirt with jeans, and smelt of a sweet, woody fragrance. John approached with a shy smile as Jessica leaned towards Blake.

“Is this your friend?” asked Jessica loudly.

Blake quickly introduced the girls. Jessica had light brown hair and a perfect smile, she was qualified to advertise Colgate products with her symmetrical white teeth.

“So what’s a guy like you doing here?” Jessica queried.

“I’m here on vacation, spending a few weeks in Europe sightseeing.”

“Same with us,” Jessica mentioned.

Tori was more reserved. She temporarily made eye contact with John, and then she stared out bar area looking at empty tables. Her mind seemed elsewhere.

Her long, black hair teased the curve of her cheekbones, highlighting her bright blue eyes.

Both girls were tall with slender builds. They wore Ferrari-red lipstick and were tanned, evidence they had enjoyed the warm European sun.

The four drank steadily for the next two hours as they learned about one another. Jessica and Tori were 23, from Miami, and had loved backpacking Europe for the past month. Blake told them how the guys met in the beer tents in Munich a week earlier and decided to go on a road trip, which brought them here to the northern German city of Hamburg, the greatest port town in the world.

“We’re going out tonight to see Hamburg. Come with us!” Blake said.

“We can’t. Sorry,” Tori replied.

“What? Sorry, ladies. I’m not taking no for an answer.”

Jessica turned to have word with Tori. “Why not? What are you thinking we should do instead?” she asked curiously.

John leaned into Blake. “Nice going, Blake. You scared them away in ten seconds. Do you have any other world records you’d like to attempt today?”

John shook his head at Blake’s natural arrogance.

“Shall we leave, ladies?” Blake asked.

The four left the hostel bar and walked in the warm autumn evening to the nightlife part of town, The Reeperbahn.