

Ramona Busch - The lost paradise

Young Valentin receives encrypted messages from a mysterious Cecilia whom he has never met. Together with his cousin Selina, he embarks on a quest to find what the world has lost. But can the two solve the mystery when they don't even know what they are looking for? A captivating novel that artfully intertwines joy and misfortune, as well as reality and the world of dreams.

Dr. Ramona Busch, born in 1981, skilfully navigates between the meticulous world of numbers and the liberating world of music and writing. After studying international economics in Nuremberg and Valencia, she passionately deepened her expertise as a federal banker in vibrant Frankfurt. But when the office chair remains cold, she can be found on dance trips in the Caribbean or dancing the tango in Argentina. Her musical soul moves between rock, classical music, jazz, swing and always the tango, whereby the clarinet always leaves a special sound in her heart.

Ramona Busch

The lost paradise

Novel



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THE LOST PARADISE

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For
Emil, Johann and Ralf

CECILIA'S INSPIRATION

Why didn't it work anymore? As long as humanity had existed, she had been able to look after and nurture what she loved so much. She had held a protective hand over all musicians, regardless of genre, amateur or professional. How could people lose what they had carried with them and within them since the beginning of time? She had even made it possible for the deaf to compose complete symphonies. And now it was suddenly all going to be over? She could not and would not accept that. There had to be a way. She urgently needed to find out what was going on in the human world. But she realized that she couldn't do this alone. She had to find someone who was willing to listen to her and accept what she was saying.

But who – when even she simply couldn't reach people anymore? She needed someone who understood her language and could communicate with humans as well. The beings in Cecilia's world were quite out of the question. She didn't know a single creature she could trust. They all had an assigned purpose, and they pursued a strong self-interest in its fulfillment. They would certainly not be able to approach this extremely important perplexity with impartiality, motivation or even give it full attention. Then, too, they could only communicate with

humans to a limited extent, only able to send them signs. But to understand why mankind was increasingly losing access to music, Cecilia needed to understand more precisely what was going on in people's minds. Should she turn directly to an earthly creature? To someone who understood her signs and helped her to penetrate the human world?

She sat down at the piano. Music was good. Music helped her to relax when she was perplexed. She had hardly played the first few bars of "Mi Amor" when she fell into a trance. She loved playing the piano. She had swapped her organ for this piano many years ago. Thanks to the dynamics of the piano, she was able to give her music more expression. Now came the improvisation part. This was the part where she could let out all her emotions. That did her good. She simply felt warmth and love as she played the piece.

Suddenly it came to her mind: "Of course, love! Come on Cecilia, think! What does love tell us?" She looked above the piano at the picture of the Holy Virgin with the infant Jesus. The sight of the gentle face of the Mother of God had to associate love with purity and innocence, didn't it? She wondered if that also applied to people? She wasn't sure. But it was worth a try. She had to find someone with a pure heart. A golden heart! But what human

could be pure of heart? She looked again at the picture of the Virgin and Child. Then the idea came to her

VALENTIN OVERSLEEPS

“VALENTIN! VALENTIN!” squawked from the cage. It was Magnus, the parrot. Crap, he had overslept and Magnus had woken him up. “Valentin! Valentin!” The sound was annoying.

“All right, Magnus, I’m getting up! Can you tell me how to switch you off?” asked Valentin, not really serious.

Magnus knew exactly two words. The second was a cuss word. Such words were not welcome in Valentin’s family. Anyone who used one had to put money into a little penalty box. But how was a feathered creature supposed to pay up? So Magnus was the only member of the family who was allowed to swear without penalty. Most of the money came from Valentin’s Dad, Konrad. Valentin was better than his parents at sticking to these rules. Perhaps he was generally better at sticking to rules. Sometimes he had the feeling that adults didn’t make rules for children, but just to feel good about themselves. Like the thing with Dad and the couch. But that was another story.

Now Valentin had to get dressed quickly and head off to school, because today was the big class test in programming. Grabbing a pretzel, Valentin jumped on his bike and set off. Quickly along Burgenstrasse. Past the ice cream parlour – where Valentin’s father always took the family

when the penalty box was full again – and finally down through the underpass. Just at that moment, an ICE train thundered over Valentin. He was startled for a moment and almost dropped the pretzel. He finally arrived at school. He didn't lock the bike. It took too much time, and he could do it during the break. Phew, lucky him! Mrs Reiman was just about to hand out the test sheets and apparently didn't notice that the door had opened again. Valentin quickly sat down at the computer at the very back next to the window.

When Valentin came home from school, it was very quiet at home. Mum was away on business for two days, but Dad would probably be home from work soon. Dad would be home early today, since he had started work very early. He had had a virtual meeting with colleagues from the other side of the globe. Fortunately, this didn't happen often; Valentin's Dad was a real night owl and hated getting up early.

Then the door opened. "Hello Valentin. Are you there? Sorry you had to get up and have breakfast alone this morning! Did everything go ok? Did you get to school on time? And most importantly, did you take a snack with you?" Yeah, just like these adults. 1000 questions at once.

"Yes, Dad, everything went really well. You know me!" replied Valentin, bored.

“Valentin” came a call from the pantry. “What are we going to cook? Are you really hungry, too? A lot of questions again. At least the food question went better when Mum was there. But she was currently at an oncology conference in another city.

“How about spaghetti and that sauce that Mum hates so much? Now would be the time!” suggested Valentin. Apparently it was thought transfer, because his father already had the coveted sauce in his hand. Men’s Day was really nice!

While the sauce bubbled, Valentin sank into thought. He thought about how his parrot had woken him up in the morning. Funny, that usually never happened to him. Okay, admittedly, there was usually at least one adult at home to wake him up. But today, of all days, his parents had left the house before him and let him sleep because they wanted to give him that extra hour of sleep. It had all been discussed and Valentin had set his alarm clock. But for the life of him, he couldn’t remember whether the alarm clock had actually gone off and he had simply turned it off while he was half asleep. He had had such a beautiful dream that night. Everything had been so real. Those piercing blue eyes and those light-footed movements. Like an elf, or is dancer a better description? Strange, the dream was still so vivid in his mind.

“Valentin, would you like a little more spice in the sauce?” his father asked.

“Er, what?” Valentin stammered.

“Are you daydreaming?”

“Um, no, better not spicy. Can you add a little cream?” asked Valentin. He didn’t hear the answer. Valentin’s thought had already gone back to his dream. He tried to remember the dancer’s words. They were complicated words, almost like a riddle. But suddenly the following came to his mind:

“Seek the connection to paradise as Hildegard describes it! Communicate in silence! Find memory where there is none! And let yourself be shown the beauty of the colours in the darkness! Let the one who carries a burden show you lightness!”

Valentin wrote the words down on a yellow piece of paper as quickly as possible, fearing he would forget them just as quickly as they had come to mind. Did this mean anything?

CECILIA IS SUSPICIOUS OF MUERTE

She didn't like him. Not at all. Although – he had taken her over the Rainbow Bridge to the other side with an undeniably gentle palanquin. It had been like a light-footed dance, floating and painless. And although Muerte was not particularly beautiful, there had been a certain sweetness and mercy in the air when he had come for her. He had pulled her gently towards him, they had been united in dance, and yet there had been a cool distance between them. Or was it simply the fact that you couldn't look him straight in the eye? She had seen him several times since. And yet she couldn't really describe him. He often showed many faces, but she still couldn't pinpoint one. He had too many different faces and yet somehow none.

She flinched on the piano stool when she felt a slight draught.

“Cécile! Que plaisir!” came a confident echo.

There he stood, in the middle of her parlour. He had the habit of neither ringing the doorbell nor knocking. He simply announced himself with a cool breath of air. And anyway: “Cécile” as he often called her. Couldn't he just say “Cecilia” like everyone else? He seemed to have got stuck in an era when French was considered chic and wanted to seem elegant come hell or high water. But you

had to hand it to him; he always looked impressive in his black robe.

“Muerte, can’t you even announce yourself normally? I’m scared to death every time!” Cecilia hissed at him.

“To death! Oh, your pun, *ma chérie*! Oh *mon amour*, you know...” he replied. No, she didn’t know and would probably never understand. “Oh *chérie*, what’s bothering you?” he asked cheerfully, taking off his right glove.

“You know that very well! And since you just mentioned the word *plaisir* so beautifully, I’ll ask you: WHERE did you make it disappear to?”

And now he was the one who didn’t understand.

“Okay, my friend. What don’t you understand about that? The beauty of the world is fading. How can that be, when mankind has loved aesthetics, art and music so much for hundreds of years? I see more and more functional objects, industrially manufactured, without soul and without any individuality. On the walls are increasingly sterile art prints that are barely distinguishable from one another. People even seem to have forgotten the purpose of a flower vase. At any rate, if you see one at all, it’s only being used to hold dust-repellent artificial flowers, naturally matching the grey tones of the unimaginative paintings. And what pains me personally most is that music seems to be disappearing completely from the scene.

What is a world without the universe of the sound colours of a melody? Where are they, the notes, the chords of excitement and the rhythms?" Cecilia lamented, looking up in despair. "Even nature seems increasingly grey to me, and grey is the precursor to black! Everything is dull and grey all of a sudden! Do you get it now?' she asked, but he still didn't understand.

"BLACK! I don't know anyone who likes the colour black as much as you do!" she hissed at him.

Gradually it dawned on him. He moved gently around her and spoke in a tender voice.

"Mon amour, do you seriously think that I make the beautiful things in this world disappear so that everything becomes grey? Just because I like to wear black robes myself doesn't mean that the whole world has to be grey and black. I ask you: where is the contrast to black when everything is grey? How could I still stand out if the contrasts are grey? No, mi amor..."

Now he was even starting to speak Spanish. "He seems to be trying to be particularly eloquent today," thought Cecilia, annoyed.

"Hola, are you dreaming?" he snapped her out of her thoughts. "The music is playing here, cariño!" He snapped his fingers and looked at Cecilia encouragingly.