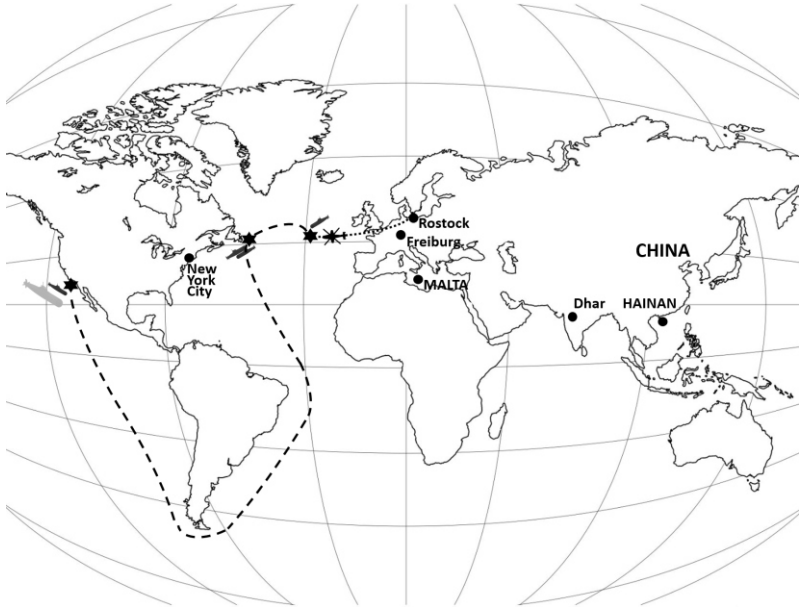


Karsten Lehmann

The Sound Trap

The Trail of the Iron Dragon

A science fiction thriller



The Sound Trap

CONTENTS

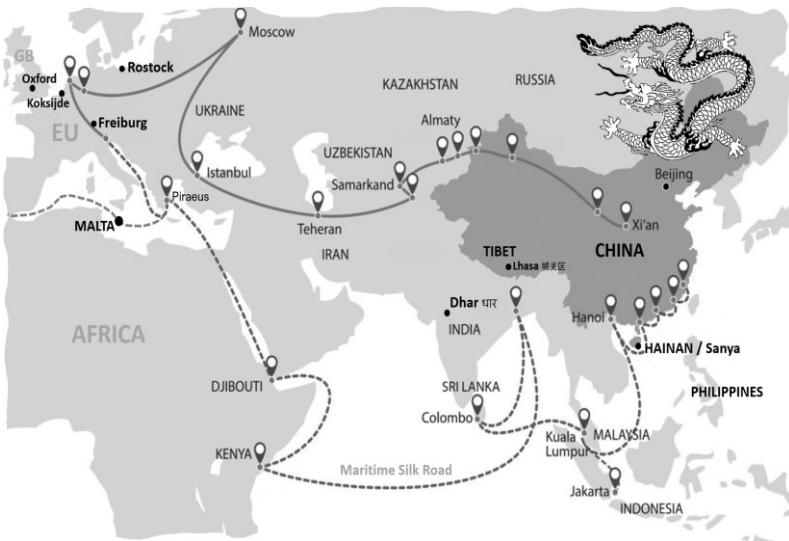
CHAPTER 1	6
CHAPTER 2	25
CHAPTER 3	37
CHAPTER 4	60
CHAPTER 5	85
CHAPTER 6	98
CHAPTER 7	122
CHAPTER 8	161
CHAPTER 9	199
CHAPTER 10.....	227
CHAPTER 11.....	263
CHAPTER 12.....	283
CHAPTER 13.....	304
CHAPTER 14.....	318
CHAPTER 15.....	339
CHAPTER 16.....	355
CHAPTER 17.....	385
EPILOG.....	406
AUTHOR'S MESSAGE	410
PERSONS IN THE BOOK.....	416
GLOSSARY.....	420

The Sound Trap

CHAPTER 1

*The truth is a mixture
of facts and assumptions,
but is sometimes difficult to see.
Prejudices are no good as visual aids
because whoever takes them off,
can look much further.*

(Indian lore, about 800 BC)



"What a damn mess!" Brian heard cursing from down the hall. That must have been Olaf, known for his tantrums. It was annoying, but by now, most were already ignoring him. Few understood it as a cry for help, and hardly anyone knew how to act. Since conversations with him were problematic, hardly anyone dared to talk about private matters. It was like a solid wall that grew higher and higher over time. Finally, one after the

The Sound Trap

other had given up. It was an open secret that the poor guy had been pushed into this thankless position shortly before his retirement. He could work out his frustrations alone at the end of a long staff building.

Something else was on Brian's mind from the moment he got up. One thought stuck in his head like gum on the sole of a shoe. It was the book just read, the autobiography of a former professional basketball player. In it, he movingly described intimate things. Especially when it came to sexual fantasies, Brian experienced people usually being a little communicative. Although he generally poured out his heart openly, this did not apply to such topics. Reading this, he realized that perhaps the athlete had opened a door for many. A door through which Brian would not walk at the moment. Conversely, it was his job to use all communication channels to penetrate the most hidden regions of other brains.

With other cultures, he learned about significant differences. Intimate topics were handled very differently and sometimes not discussed publicly at all. Nevertheless, Brian knew that most would gladly confide in someone if only there were opportunities. However, Brian also found widespread knowledge about sexuality was still severely limited. It bothered him that young people still didn't easily find practical, age-appropriate information on the Internet. As in Brian's family, it was often not the parents who provided practical sex education at the right age.

The fact that he was so agitated that day could have been due to a small passage in the book. To his knowledge, no one had ever dared to do such a thing. And now it's simply in the autobiography of a celebrity.

Specific fantasies also occupied Brian since childhood. At that time, he thought it was because he was not quite normal in other respects. It didn't bother him much when he was called a freak. But he felt offended when rumors about his psychic abilities circulated at school, which someone must have made up. Although the teachers at the time did a lot to clear things up, he still felt the unease of some parents when he visited school friends.

The Sound Trap

This basketball player described how he could get into a mental coupling with his partner. They developed their fantasies together before physical contact occurred. Things got even crazier when he claimed to have had sex with an angel in this way before. Brian knew most people would dismiss it as a description of fanciful dreams. He read between the lines that there were possibly actual events described. He suspected it might be a special distress call or warning. Certainly, a strange thought, at least at the first moment.

By half past three that morning, the book's last page had been devoured. When the radio alarm reminded him of real life, fatigue set in, and, once back at his office, so did the inability to concentrate on work.

For the past six months, he had been assigned to a special command that, among other things, coordinated operational plans for naval vessels operating worldwide at the Rostock site. The newly built Maritime Operations Center (*MOC*) complex was occupied only a few years ago. Before that, the location on the German Baltic coast moved from Glücksburg to Rostock. Brian got his own office in the four-story building. He wasn't used to that and didn't like being there alone. Working in teams was essential to him because, as a language expert, he preferred to use all his senses in communication. When he began serving in the military, he was offered the opportunity to work more intensively with computational linguistics. This was a means of filtering out emotions in texts or synthetic languages.

During the pandemic of the early twenties, people inevitably moved apart. The lack of physical contact meant that Brian, too, spoke to others mainly by electronic means. It was hard for him because he had learned to use his entire body to convey words and feelings all his life. Isolating people meant a dramatic change for him. However, he also heard other things. After all, many contemporaries had already become accustomed to communicating mainly via digital media.

His employer, the US Navy, had sent him to Germany for a particular NATO project. Although it involved an exciting topic, he

The Sound Trap

would have liked to stay back in the States for the time being. It was, therefore, increasingly difficult to meet up with old friends. As a result, these relationships became increasingly superficial.

Since he was fluent in several languages, he was sent around the globe immediately after joining the navy. That was probably one of the reasons his ex had broken up with him after months of long-distance dating. She also made no secret that she was now living with one of her former co-students.

There was something about the way staff officers often requested Brian's presence when negotiating with international parties to a conflict. During his primary studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, he learned about Tibetan Buddhism and various types of meditation, as well as Egyptian alchemy and shamanism.

Before joining the navy, he had spent time in Germany several times, taking special courses at the University of Freiburg. There he could meet other people with paranormal abilities and expand his knowledge of telepathic communication. He also learned ancient Greek and Sanskrit there. These languages allowed him to read the writings of the ancient philosophers and the Indian *Vedas* in the original. He remembered this time in southern Germany fondly. Someone had arranged for him to stay in a student flat-sharing community for the first few days. Initially skeptical about whether he could cope with his mania for order, he liked it so much that he moved again into a larger shared flat.

At the university and in his living environment, he met the most exciting friends of his life. Communicating with them was always something special. One of the unusual kinds of people was Anna. He dealt with her during training, in particular techniques in telepathy. As a lecturer, Anna taught even more advanced ancient methods of this communication. While his friends found Anna attractive, Brian didn't feel that way. Somehow, he thought she would treat him dismissively, too. As soon as he drifted into a private conversation, she distanced herself. That could be one of her principles to keep some authority as a lecturer. Sometimes she even seemed a bit snippy to him, almost like a pubescent teenager.

The Sound Trap

In the first weeks, Brian had thought Anna had met many skeptics. Such people sometimes faked their interest, even if there was some curiosity. She used to tell her students how she could test their real interests. It was the way someone dealt with their failures in training. And much of Anna's methods reminded Brian of his experiences with skeptics.

Most people secretly wished they had some supernatural powers. The desire for recognition was part of life, and those who had mastered something special were quicker to take center stage. On the other hand, Brian experienced absolute rejection from those who saw his abilities as a threat to their careers. After all, the ability to lie well is a means of gaining an unfair advantage. In Brian's presence, however, this advantage quickly vanished into thin air.

There was one thing Brian found particularly interesting about Anna. He quickly noticed that she sensed it immediately when he tried to get inside her head. Outside his training group, most people thought it was hocus pocus when he tried to talk to them about telepathy. He was quickly labeled an esoteric crackpot. In any case, his non-verbal communication skills improved every year of his life. Anna undoubtedly contributed to this with her techniques and unconventional teaching methods.

In the meantime, Brian had developed into a tangible medium. He was now able to teach others. When others called him a medium, he was somehow uncomfortable. It brought back unwanted childhood memories. Believing he could read their minds, most people quickly distanced themselves. People with this ability knew very well that many myths circulated around telepathy, but still little enlightenment. Of course, it was also to blame for the fact that the currently available scientific articles could only be found if you knew your way around. The TV stations have also realized there is good money to be made in popular science content. In the meantime, even topics like the UFO phenomenon had become presentable. At that time, Brian was like most people because he still lifted his head towards the starry sky when he dreamed of extraterrestrial life and not human intelligence.

The Sound Trap

"Brian, wait a minute! Are you coming bowling Thursday evening?" Christina approached him from behind. She, too, had not been working on the *MOC* for long. Few things Brian knew about her personal life. This included many friends and the fact that she always wanted to experience something somewhere. Christina didn't seem to be in a committed relationship, however.

Unsure how to answer and to buy a few seconds, Brian asked, "Is the new bowling center open yet?"

"Yes. Although we have only one lane, with you, I would have then anyway only s..., I mean ... we would only be six, anyway."

Brian started laughing even before Christina finished the sentence. He apologized for it right away. She had no way of knowing, but it was the case that Brian was already thinking the sentence through before his conversation partner could formulate it. He didn't think it was anything like clairvoyance. He explained it to himself with the fact that he could process body signals simply furiously fast. Besides, it was logical because now only seven people were working on this floor, and six sometimes did something together. As in this case, Brian usually found a reason why he often knew the outcome of a conversation in advance. However, there were sometimes situations when he was surprised when he was right in his foresight. It was uncanny, for example, when he saw an interview on television and had the impression that the interviewee was reading the answer from Brian's brain. Of course, there were various explanations for this, and it didn't have anything to do with paranormal abilities. If there weren't other strange occurrences that his superiors also knew about.

Until recently, Brian had been stationed on a navy frigate, which had lately been in port in Malta for a few days. During shore leave, an accident occurred that also involved his comrade Sean. During questioning, they could only remember some of the details. The captain wanted to send them both on convalescent leave on the doctor's recommendation. Brian, however, had other plans and asked to be allowed to do indoor duty at Rostock Naval Base instead of convalescent leave. The captain granted him this on the condition

The Sound Trap

that he attend psychological care twice a week for as long as the medical staff deemed it necessary.

At the first examination in Rostock, Brian was asked to give details of the incident. Thereupon he described very roughly what had happened but then quickly regretted it. Either the psychotherapist was interested in this story, or someone had asked her to squeeze Brian. Or maybe she was happy to have found an intriguing subject for her research. At first, he only wanted to describe a few sentences. But the therapist was not satisfied with that and insisted on hearing the whole story.

So, Brian began to describe the circumstances of his accident,

"My basic training was just completed when I was transferred to the US Naval Information Service. We call that unit ONI. That was just under six months ago. I was interested in this position because it seemed the most interesting job in the navy. They mainly handle surveillance of other nations' naval forces there. As everywhere, there are also a few special units that deal with counterintelligence tasks. I didn't have much information about this at the beginning ..."

After an exercise in the Mediterranean, Brian's ship, a German Saxon-class frigate, was in Malta for a few days. Brian persuaded Sean, with whom he sometimes spent his free time, to visit some archaeological sites. He already had something in mind and now only had to convince his comrade to come along.

"How are we going to get there?" Sean wanted to know.

"I've been looking through the local tourist listings. Look, we could rent an electric quad here. Supposedly you're allowed into the national parks with that thing."

"But only when I'm driving!" Sean wanted to make it clear.

"Looks like we'll have to rent two of these things then. I'm not getting in the back with you," with which Brian made it clear that he found something wrong with his friend's driving style. Sean just returned from his vacation and boarded again two days ago in Malta. Suddenly, he had other doubts and said, "I have a terrible muscle ache in my ass. I wonder if these quads have proper seats?"

The Sound Trap

"Sore muscles? You never do any sports on vacation, and you can't ride either! At most, it could have been the sports seats in your new Mustang!"

"Haha, admit it already that you are jealous of my car. By the way, it's not just my ass that hurts. I had the shittiest seat on the transport flight from Ramstein to Malta. That won't happen to you, of course. You usually fly with the officers in business class. Someday I'll figure out how you do it."

Eventually, they agreed to each drive their quad and booked a day tour over the Internet.

From books on European antiquity, Brian knew that Malta was one of the most amazing places in Europe and had a lot of archaeological features to offer. Like Sardinia or the Balearic Islands, parts of the Maltese republic hid many mysteries. Therefore, extensive protection measures had been initiated on the wondrous island of Menorca and Malta to protect the unique temples, caves, and structures that still seem strange today.

Brian knew from his student days that many places from ancient writings do not yet appear in modern literature. At least in the official archaeological records. Despite this, more and more laterals were writing about what mysterious things were still to be discovered there. In the writings of the ancient Greeks, there were regular mentions of structural facilities, the purpose of which archaeologists were still puzzling. Since a mystery sounds like something scientists wouldn't know what to do with, many of these discoveries were eventually simply declassified as "cult sites".

People like Brian, however, smelled this rat from afar. One example that immediately came to his mind was the matter of the miles-long, so-called *cart ruts* on the ground-level rocks. With this term, tourists were fooled for a long time, probably to avoid further inquiries. Fortunately, there were also technically versed visitors, who immediately noticed that a cart track running in the ground would always have to run parallel. The wheels would have had to be hige, with indentations up to 27 inches deep. In addition, there are places where the track is interrupted and suddenly continues a

The Sound Trap

little further away. After all, one would hardly have carried the car there. Sometimes the paths even cross each other.

During a lecture in Malta, a lecturer amusedly reminded us of the female Cyclopes from Greek mythology, who might have driven their babies around in gigantic baby carriages. A student had replied that it must have been the cyclopean males who were put on the track by their wives to dutifully drive out the children. And by the way, no one is stupid enough to walk the same path every day without noticing that the wheels are digging deeper and deeper into the rock. Moreover, women would prefer the company of other parents and walking side by side to be able to talk. Then someone went one better and added, "The parents of the baby cyclops must have already owned smartphones. With these 'rails' in the rocks, they could chat with their friends while walking, without paying attention to the path."

Eventually, everyone agreed on why the cyclops were extinct. Namely, some of these "tracks" ended in the sea. Consequently, all those smartphone-junkie parents and their offspring probably drowned while walking.

"Well, that should be a warning to all new-age parents!" the lecturer concluded then with approving laughter.

At least such casual incidents at the university showed Brian that there were tendencies in official science to no longer convey nonsense without comment. During this trip, they would finally be able to look at some of the remains of these strangely carved stones. He was not only friends with his comrade Sean, who, as an intelligent technician, often had good ideas when discussing old cultural sites. One thing bothered him, though. Sean often obtained information from the Internet, the originators of which Brian did not consider reputable. When questioned about it, the topics and the way they were disseminated usually matched what he knew about manipulative methods in *social psychology*. But since Sean was still listening to others, Brian didn't think he was a lost cause.

The trip started on an early Sunday morning. Still in the port of Malta, they picked up their reserved electric quads from a rental

The Sound Trap

station. It was apparent from the four-wheeled motorcycles that they were already doing hard labor. The rental station employee pointed out that they could only drive on public roads. Of course, the two only smiled because they could have rented a small car for half the price. They wanted to experience the fun of driving off-road. Sean looked skeptically at the wheel suspensions and suspected that the models were not designed for heavy terrain. Not wanting to worry Brian, he said nothing.

Then they drove off. Sean had brought a military GPS device. It wasn't strictly legal, but there seemed to be a broad interpretation of the regulations for his fellow troopers. With this device, navigation was enjoyable, especially off the roads. The information about the current position, which was accurate to less than one yard, made the map an excellent orientation aid. The satellite images were so detailed that even trees and stone walls could be used for navigation.

The way led across the island in the direction of the south coast. They had first entered the small town of *Dingli* as their destination. Then the software had to calculate a route they could pass with their barely fifty-inch quads. This was not difficult, but they noticed something strange. Some spots on the map had been blurred. While they knew blurring military or other secret installations was standard, the nearby radar station was tiny. That didn't explain why such large portions of the area had been neutralized. Military maps could be cleared of "blurs" using a password, depending on the user's security level. Sean, of course, had not been able to obtain such a password. In any case, it was suspicious and made the two excursionists curious about what to see.

They needed much longer for the route than planned. Sean got stuck in a crevice, and they already had the first breakdown. The search for a stable branch to lever out was finally successful. Shortly after that, both failed on a slope. It was too slippery even for the four-wheel drive vehicles because of the wet green surface. Hence, a detour had to be found.

The next surprise was soon to come. They got a terrible scare when a goat suddenly cried out right in front of them. The quads

The Sound Trap

approached, and the poor creature probably saw its end coming in mortal fear.

"The goat should have heard us coming. Why didn't it flee? Or are the e-quads not easy to hear off-road?" Sean asked while Brian was already formulating his answer, "Maybe the old beast is already deaf, or someone rarely strays here, so the local game feels safe."

"I don't think so. Take a look around. There are remnants of bird-catching nets lying around everywhere. I know that catching wild birds is forbidden here."

"Right. And it won't be the remains of a veil party. So, they're still catching rare birds. And that's why bird catchers will show up regularly."

They stopped their vehicles again a few minutes later to look at the navigation device. Their destination was near. Despite the proximity to the ocean and slightly gusty wind, it was dead quiet. Sean asked, "Can you feel it?"

"Yes, funny. It's not just the goats that seem to go deaf here. It sounds like being in a soundproofed recording studio. And your voice sounds all silenced, too."

"I've seen something like this before, and there are legends about it," Brian spoke very loudly, "In England, there are *Whispering Knights*. They are also called *Whispering Stones*. They belong to a complex of monuments south of Long Compton. In this, various groups of monoliths are scattered in the area. These were arranged in the landscape following a given system."

"I've heard something like that before. But what did you experience there?"

"This place is haunting, and I didn't feel well afterward."

"What do you mean?"

"This megalithic site seems to have a life of its own. It sounds idiotic, but the stones don't just speak to people. They also speak to each other. If you stay there in certain places and times of the day, there's an effect like this. All the sounds of the surroundings fall silent. At similar sites worldwide, most people don't feel much or only imagine they feel something because they go there with a certain expectation. At the *Whispering Stones*, it's different. There,

The Sound Trap

anyone who spends a little longer among the monoliths gets goosebumps. They say it's the language of the dark side. And although I understand many languages, I couldn't do anything with those creepy sounds."

Sean had listened with interest and replied, "I'm so glad!"

"By the way, the measurements have shown that the stones emit an ultrasound. This is strongest shortly after sunrise. There are also already scientifically confirmed reports for this."

"I'd consider anyone else a nut who told me stuff like that," Sean replied.

"And you don't think I'm crazy?" Brian wanted to know.

"Sometimes I do because you say kinky stuff all the time. But you've also proven a lot of it to me. You always blush when you lie, which makes you trustworthy."

"Yeah, nobody wants me on their team at *rubber bridge*," Brian admitted.

"The honest ones always lose. Sometimes you let others take advantage of you with that, too."

"Maybe, but I feel good the way it is. Even though honesty will probably never make me rich."

Finally, the two decided to stay on the slightly more passable path the rest of the way to *Dingli Cliffs*. Brian rode behind Sean's quad, struggling to keep up with him. His eyes scanned the ground for noticeable structures, hoping to find something unusual. Then he saw something, stopped, and walked back a few feet. Sure enough, across the path ran two plunging grooves that continued left and right of the way in the rocky ground. The two-yard-wide roadway had tracks about fifteen inches deep filled in with concrete. Otherwise, they would have caused an unpleasant drop over the handlebars. Sean saw Brian lagging in the rearview mirror and turned around.

"What's the matter, something broken?"

"No, but I think we found it!"

"You don't mean those grooves in the rock? The stone here was certainly washed out by the water. I thought we'd look at something exciting!"

The Sound Trap

"No, this has nothing to do with erosion. It's the *cart ruts* I told you about. Let's continue foot from now on. The tracks that cross this path here are mostly overgrown. But I think I know where they lead."

"Do you know, or did you have another one of those visions?"

"I can't tell you. I just know," Brian muttered. The tone of Sean's question annoyed him. For sure, he would have preferred to ride the quad rather than walk now. Brian, on the other hand, was electrified after his discovery. The excitement was evident on his face. Sean finally gave in, but not without grumbling again, "I was looking forward to a breathtaking view at Dingli Rocks. Finally, we jump through the bushes like goats following imaginary tracks."

While Sean finally walked behind him, unmotivated, a thought occurred to Brian. Why had he just remembered the *Whispering Stones* earlier? There were many more striking examples of the hearing loss phenomenon. Now he feared that this might have been one of the suspicions that did not bode well.

Brian was so energized that he missed Sean struggling over the rocks covered with flat shrubs, barely keeping up.

"Be careful; there are crevices and holes here! At this rate, we'll fall in somewhere," he called to his friend from behind.

"What's got into you? Are you trying to show the goats how to long jump? They can do it better with four legs!"

Brian then waited a moment, turned to his gasping comrade, and yelled, "Sorry, I feel we don't have much time left. I'll explain later. Right now, we need to hurry. Just trust me."

When Sean caught up, he muttered, "I am an idiot! What have I gotten myself into here again? One day this madman will kill us."

Less than a minute later, Brian stopped suddenly, but Sean could not control his run so quickly and rammed into the man in front of him. Rowing with his hands, he tried to hold on to the bushes as he fell. But they gave way, and Brian slid headfirst into a hole in the ground. Hanging in the bushes, he tried to bring his body upright. The feet had to get a grip somehow. He succeeded at first, but the branches broke. That's how the slide began. In any movie, the casualty would have screamed to heighten the drama. Brian,

The Sound Trap

however, remained silent. Sean watched helplessly from above as his comrade disappeared into the hole. When the rumbling had subsided, and Sean was staring down in panic, he shouted Brian's name. There was no answer, and the view was blocked by dense bushes. Only a foul stench came out as if stagnant water had been stirred up, in which plant remains had been moldering away for centuries.

"Are you still alive?"

At least Brian was moving because sounds could be heard from below. Then came an answer, "No, I don't think so. But other than that, I'm okay...just gross down here."

"I can't see you. How deep is the hole?"

"Maybe fifteen feet or so. I can't say exactly. There's nothing stable to climb up."

"I'll go back and get the rope. Make yourself comfortable for that long!"

"Thanks for the advice!" Brian replied, but Sean was already returning to the quads where they had left some equipment. While waiting, Brian tried to shimmy his way to the pit's edge. After pushing some plants aside, it became clear the hole had been driven into the rock with tools.

Could this be an old pitfall? Hardly, the inhabitants would have discovered it long ago and filled it in like the many other holes in this area, Brian thought. He also noticed that rainwater could only accumulate in this cavity for a short time. The water edges on the rock indicated a changing water level. It was a very porous sandstone.

Why has this hole been left without a barrier? Something is not right here, Brian pondered while he waited for Sean to return.

After a while, he looked at his watch, which by now showed ten minutes to one, and wondered. Sean should have been back after forty minutes. But an hour had already passed. That he could have gotten lost was very unlikely. He pulled his cell phone out of his leg pocket and was pleased to see that the thing had remained waterproof as promised in the commercials. He dialed Sean's

The Sound Trap

number but got no connection, although a G5 quality reception bar was displayed.

There could be a dozen reasons why someone might be late. Meanwhile, the stinking mud made Brian's body shiver with coldness. It was summer, but the temperature was much lower than outside the hole. The damp rock acted like a wine cooler.

What's this guy doing so long? Hopefully, he didn't fall and is lying around with a sprained ankle. I was so stupid. Why did I run so fast in front, even in this terrain?

Then he heard a rustling sound as if the wind were brushing through leaves. Of course, this was not possible in this hole in the ground, so it had to have another reason. Brian slid his hands along the plants and moved from one spot to another. He searched ceaselessly for a better foothold and a way to free himself from the unpleasant plant mush. Now he noticed that it was getting darker. Was a thundercloud passing by here? The weather forecast had not predicted any rain for this and the next two days. They would never have dared a trip to the cliffs on the coast if a thunderstorm had been announced.

It was getting darker and darker, as if someone was dimming the lights with a switch. Another glance at the clock and ... *Son of a bitch. How can this be?* His smartwatch already showed 17:30. *The damn thing couldn't have changed itself to the wrong time zone*, he thought and pulled out his phone again to see what location it was showing. The circumstances became stranger and stranger. The phone now read 17:50, as did his wristwatch. Time seemed to fly. Had his gaze upward not encountered a starry sky, he would have simply dismissed the mystery with the time as a technical error. But the cell phone display showed a cell phone provider he didn't know, instead of the Maltese provider "GoMobile" as he had expected. With the four-and-a-half-hour time difference, the onset of darkness, and the location of Nandi in the Indian state of Karnataka indicated, it all fell into place. Brian had already experienced a lot of adventures. Some of it, however, he could not tell others just like that. Or only to those who knew his oddities. His comrades had already had fun with him, maybe because he seemed like a weirdo.

The Sound Trap

But this experience here was so absurd that it couldn't even be a prank by his comrades.

I must concentrate now and get my pulse down. Otherwise, the meditation will fail. Without this calm, I won't come up with anything creative, Brian thought and pressed his back against the rock behind him. Now he began his thought exercises to tune the frequencies of several brain regions to each other. A few minutes later, his pulse dropped while, at the same time, his brain's *theta waves* (4-7 hertz) increased. These waves occur when the human subconscious is active, such as during REM sleep, meditation, or hypnosis. In this state, some people could achieve mental coupling with others, provided the interlocutor was familiar with this practice and his brain was in a similar condition.

For Brian, it made no sense to think about whether what was going on in his head now was real. He had learned enough about Asian meditation to know that you must first listen to your thoughts. Only when enough information had been accumulated could the two brain hemispheres weigh logic and emotion against each other and piece together the puzzle of snippets of thought. Brian was able to memorize much faster than most people using this method. What he had found out during years of training was later confirmed for him in Freiburg. Both the instructors there and Anna, with whom Brian had trained frequently, confirmed a long-held suspicion. A person experiences a breakthrough in creativity only when he can tap into the global information fields, also called *morphic fields*.

Maybe today I'll have the improbable luck to succeed without outside assistance, Brian encouraged himself. While trying to sense these information fields, there was an irresistible urge to look at the clock. No matter what time it was, it wouldn't get him any further. With that, the mind won out, and Brian fell into a deep trance. Although this was part of everyday life for a practiced medium, something unexpected happened in his body during this self-hypnosis.

The Sound Trap



For the last few yards, Sean sped up his run again before throwing himself at the edge of the hole in the ground and calling down, "I'm back. Are you okay?"

Even for an athletically built soldier like him, this run across the rocky ground was torture. Despite his increased breathing rate, he held his breath for a moment. It was the only way he could concentrate on what Brian would answer. No answer came, however. Panic set in because that silence down there couldn't mean anything good. Calling down repeatedly, he finally began to look for a solid spot to tie the rope. A few yards away, there was a dry olive tree. Using a flat stone, he exposed a root and tied the rope's end. This root should be able to hold two adult men if necessary. The rope was long enough to wrap the other end around a second tree trunk. This could serve as an improvised pulley if necessary. He hurried back to the hole and threw down the rope's end.

"Brian! Can you hear me?"

Still no answer.

Hopefully, he didn't pass out from the putrid gases. If a poisonous animal bit him, Brian might have fainted and suffocated in the rotten pulp, Sean thought, trying to think of a way to protect himself from an insect bite. But he couldn't think of more than stuffing his pant legs tightly into the lace-up boots. Then he checked the rope several times and descended into the hole. As Sean climbed, his eyes kept a panicked lookout for spiders and snakes.

If I were better versed in biology, I'd know what to look for. Oh well, those who see a lot worry more, he told himself, trying to stop thinking about the little creepy crawlies that could jump down his neck at any moment. Before he set foot in the stinking mud, he turned around in all directions. There was nothing to be seen of his comrade.

Damn it! He must have gone under. He had no choice but to climb into the wet material. With his arms, he rummaged panic-stricken in the plant mush, trying to feel Brian's body. With his hands, he pulled out branches until he got hold of something that

The Sound Trap

caused another adrenaline rush. It was a piece of cloth. He pulled it out and was relieved to find the remnant of a bird net. After minutes of intense searching, Sean wondered if it could even be that. The hole was perhaps ten feet in diameter. With his body, he was only sunk in above the waist. Brian couldn't be in the mush. There was no room for a second grown man here.

Can this be a stupid joke on his part? That doesn't fit Brian. Maybe the guy had already climbed out, and we missed each other?

Sean decided to climb out again.

"Brian, where are you?" he shouted in all directions after standing upright at the hole's edge.

Where did this guy go? Why didn't he wait for me, he wondered, once it was clear that his comrade could no longer be in the immediate vicinity. Whether he was lying helplessly behind the hills could not be seen from the ground. It was possible, however, that they had passed each other. In any case, help was needed. According to regulation, he dialed the military emergency number. The rope kept attached to the tree hanging down into the hole so it could be rechecked later. The sailor on duty in his unit answered the phone and calmly took the news of Brian's accident. While still on the phone, he reported the incident through the mandatory reporting chain and assured Sean that help was on the way.

Due to a supply mission north of Malta, the only naval helicopter stationed nearby could not be deployed. The German Navy, therefore, contacted all nearby ships that had aircraft. Then, in the early afternoon, a helicopter arrived from Sea-Watch 5, patrolling south of Malta. This vessel, which had only recently been commissioned by the sea rescue service of the same name, was able to reach the accident site by helicopter within 30 minutes. As this was a recreational accident and not a military operation, no special permission had to be obtained to call in civilian agencies. The deployed search team found no trace of Brian that evening or the following day.

The story Brian had told his psychologist ended at this point with a mundane abbreviation of what happened. Only the end of the

The Sound Trap

strange tale corresponded to the facts. According to it, Brian woke up in daylight next to the hole in the ground near the Dingli cliffs and was alone. It took him a few minutes to remember that he was on a trip with Sean before disappearing. His cell phone's battery hadn't died yet, but for some reason, it only showed "No service available". Maybe someone had blocked his SIM card. Based on his surroundings, he tried to orient himself. Because of his previous study of Maltese maps, he knew his way around. So, he also knew that the place Dingli was not far away. He set off on foot. Entirely filthy and smelling bad, Brian was looked at skeptically by the village's inhabitants. Eventually, however, someone kindly offered him help and a cell phone. After dialing the military emergency number, which Sean had also used after his disappearance, Brian's trip to Malta ended.

Of course, this was not the end of the matter. The commander wanted to know why he had not been found, even though he woke up very close to where he had last been seen. The search cameras and the helicopter's thermal imaging recordings proved that no human could have been at this spot during the overflight. Brian had no choice but to claim that he did not know what had happened.

Although his life up to this point had been anything else but monotonous, the circumstances of his absence were the most exciting thing he had experienced so far. His task was to find someone he could trust with the actual story without them doubting his sanity. He did not count his superiors among them. The psychologist, to whom he later had to tell this story somewhat involuntarily, was also not one of these trustworthy people. That is why he had not told her that his memories were limited to hours while they had spent four days searching for him in Malta.

The Sound Trap

CHAPTER 2

***D**o I hear church bells ringing, or are these the angels at heaven's gate already? Brian did not feel as if he were in a trance. He had the impression of having dozed off for a short time or been entirely unconscious for a moment. He was sure that the self-hypnosis had worked quickly. The longer the ringing continued, the stranger it seemed to him. The bells made of iron or bronze, as they were found in church towers, he had remembered differently. This one had an unmistakable sound, and the different pitches were audible.*

These can't be angelic bells. If angels were involved, they would probably keep me away from paradise with wild cries. Maybe the angels are also warned by the guardians of heaven about an idiot like me, Brian thought.

Can the next village be so close that you can hear the bells in this hole in the ground? But now Sean should be back slowly, or did something happen to him? Did someone get me out of the self-hypnosis, or what is going on here? Meditating always brings surprises. Today I guess it didn't work. Instead, the unanswered questions are piling up. Anyway, Anna seems to be unreachable at the moment. It would also be a remarkable coincidence if she had her head free to sense my mental approach. Perhaps I overestimate her, too. She is undoubtedly a brilliant medium but not nearly as well trained as the old priests. Well, in any case, she seems to be more developed than I am. Then the fault may well be mine. I wonder if she knows I don't think she's beautiful, and that's why she sometimes treats me so ... gruffly? Perhaps she can also look deeper into me than I can myself. Indeed, she won't have guessed that I sometimes had erotic thoughts when I saw her in those tight jeans. Although, when erotic thoughts are involved, even advanced people have trouble reading clear emotions in other people. Stupid stuff, I'm thinking here! I need help and can't think of anything better than dealing with my secret fantasies.

The Sound Trap

When Brian returned from his self-hypnosis and opened his eyes, it was still dark. It seemed to have gotten warmer, and there were drops of sweat on his forehead as if he had a fever. Voices were now approaching. It sounded like one of the fast Asian languages. He guessed Hindi, as he knew it from India. The voices came closer, and the glow of a flashlight hit him from above. Placing his hand protectively in front of his eyes, he asked in English if they could help him out of the hole. Soon a rope ladder dropped, and a piece of wood hit his head. The two rescuers seemed rather excited, telling him to hurry. Brian clumsily put his foot on the first bar. The rope ladder dangled back and forth on the hole's wall, which required strength and body tension to climb. Once he got the hang of it, he noticed something else. All plant growth had disappeared from this hole. There was sticky mud and a lot of debris at the bottom, but nothing that felt alive. It could never be the same hole he had fallen into.

Brian clambered awkwardly up the rope ladder. In his brain, electrons moved through the cerebral cortex at breakneck speed. His mind was trained for such moments of conflict-solving. The result of the training was that the brain areas needed to find solutions had networked together effectively. So this kind of intelligence was not a miracle, as some claim, but the result of hard training and Brian's lifestyle. This and probably a few unknown factors had enabled his brain to react optimally to such demands. It helped him to find a structure in the language of his rescuers within a few minutes.

All who possess this ability should be able to learn a new language within a few weeks. During his language studies, he realized that in the earliest phase of human development, a primordial language must have evolved from which all other languages later descended. The brains of the first humanoids had unique markers, which made them different from animals. It was the ability to perceive time, that is, to put temporal sequences in the correct order. This is one of the prerequisites for understanding logic and the birth of mathematics. At least, that was the opinion of most scientists at that time. However, during his education, Brian also talked to lecturers familiar with the *Vedas* from ancient Indian

The Sound Trap

culture. The texts sometimes suggested that artificial intelligence must have known more than logic in the past. However, according to the generally accepted thesis, ancient texts were only religious interpretations, not science. When Brian discussed with his friends, it was sometimes about the question of whether every form of logic could be represented mathematically. In any case, he held this opinion without having found the final proof yet.

In some of the old writings, it is said that this knowledge also comes again from older records. Brian could already find out some things because he had met Anna, an exceptional mathematician.

Anna was told there were places on this planet that could provide answers for Brian. To find those places it would take very little. It is the will to discard old ways of thinking and to open himself to the seemingly impossible. Then his brain would start to see differently. Then his brain would also begin to connect to a much more extensive network. Anna had also promised to tell him more about it when he was ready. But as she pointed out, it was not her job to reveal these things to him. It was all so mysterious that it kept driving Brian crazy because he couldn't get all the answers immediately. Why was Anna so cruel and closed herself to his questions repeatedly at some points? She probably knew secret things she wasn't allowed to discuss with everyone.

It was a mystery, as it often is, why all this was racing through Brian's head at that very moment while he was being rescued from a hole in the ground by strangers. He was supposed to have other problems at that moment. Or was all this no coincidence?

"Why are you so late?" one of the two old men asked in another language, and when Brian didn't answer right away, again in English. Meanwhile, he gathered up the rope ladder. The two flashlights gave enough light to let Brian see that the ladder was just long enough as if it had been made precisely for the depth of this hole.

Surely none of this could be true. The two older men look funny and act strange. I wonder if they are part of a rescue team, constantly waiting to save someone from this hole. Brian was

The Sound Trap

finishing his thought when the other old man surprised him with an answer, "Don't talk nonsense, boy. We've been waiting here for you for a week. What's happened? We're running out of time!"

Brian was sure he had not spoken aloud. Therefore, at least one of the two had to be able to communicate telepathically.

"Thank you for getting me out of the hole. But why do you say you waited? Did you know I would fall into that pit?"

No sooner had Brian asked the question than it struck him as silly. Of course, they knew. He had just said they had been waiting for him for a week. *I'll have to ask them for their names later*, Brian thought.

"My name is Ravi, and this is Kanja," they introduced themselves. The two men ran as if the devil were after them. Although Brian might have been decades younger, his legs seemed to struggle to keep up with the pace. A few minutes later, relieved, he saw a small lighted hut they were heading toward. He hoped that would be the destination of this chase. There was disappointment when Ravi yanked open the wooden door and hurried into a room at the far end of the hut. So without a break in sight, the chase continued. As he did so, he spurred Brian on again, saying, "Now hurry up! We must leave here."

The room was empty. Only a worn coconut carpet lay in the middle. Ravi pulled this aside, and a floor flap appeared.

Instinctively taking a step back to press his back against the wall, wanted Brian to know, "What are you doing?"

"We don't have time to explain now. Just trust us and start opening up to our thoughts. Then we won't have to explain every detail."

While Ravi was saying this, Brian sensed a few snippets of thought from Kanja that sounded like, *"Is he the Messenger, or should we check him out first?"*

Since Kanja was thinking in his language, Brian was unsure if he had translated it correctly. Words in Sanskrit could have different meanings. The "Messenger" was also called "the God Sent".

Brian tried to cheer himself up inwardly: *I don't feel like an angel. Hopefully, there is no confusion with an alien here.*

The Sound Trap

Then Kanja made it clear with his head that Brian should descend the steps and follow Ravi into the black hole under the floor flap. *Another hole. The last one didn't bring me any luck either*, he thought, but at the same time, he realized that there were more reasons to trust the two older men than to resist their urging.

Brian indulged in these thoughts for another second: *escape instincts are more substantial than logic. I should instead follow the logic in this case.*

Thought, done. Brian climbed down the steps into the dark.

A stone floor continued under the last step. Brian was good at observing his surroundings. That's why he noticed that the stairs and floor were worn as if people had used them for centuries. You wouldn't expect something like this in a private basement, but rather in an ancient public building. The wear and tear were so severe that he had to weigh every step, while the older men probably knew all the pitfalls of the stairs. Both Kanja and Ravi carried a small LED headlamp. Brian was amused by this sight as he thought, *I wonder if the guys ordered their headlamps on the internet.* The answer came as Ravi replied in spoken English, "Go ahead and make fun of us. You're about to stop laughing."

Brian did not find Ravi's warning worrisome. On the contrary, it reassured him. It would be different for most people in this situation, though. His specialties were linguistics and special communications. To not only hear an expression but also understand it, the listener must absorb all the factors and, at best, the energy being transmitted. He recalled a lecturer at Greensboro University. According to his thesis, spiritually advanced cultures can have a large vocabulary but need only a few words and simple grammar to express complex things. Having lost some of their language capabilities, cultures could communicate only orally or through two-dimensional writing. For this, they had to invent additional characters. Suppose you can sense the feelings of the person you are talking to. In that case, you don't have to struggle with unnecessary formulations. As proof of this thesis, the lecturer brought up Egyptian culture. According to this, the "kings of the gods" of the pre-dynastic period got by with only a few hieroglyphs. Whereby

The Sound Trap

even these were probably only used for communication with the priests. Also, the Mayas' written language in Central America proves this thesis. Scientists should understand the oldest records best because these should be expectedly the simplest. Precisely the opposite is the case.

In the end, it was still unclear to Brian why Ravi radiated so much optimism as the three traversed a dark underground tunnel.

Even tall people could walk comfortably here. The walls were relatively smooth and regularly carved out of the rock. Some parts of the walls already had signs of abrasion, indicating very long and intensive use. Twice they had turned right into another passage. In addition, all the routes ran with a slight curve. They had walked about 200 yards by now. The path then came across a larger one. It was more like a tube with a diameter of about 18 feet.

"I guess this is where your government wanted to build a subway railroad?" asked Brian, not expecting an answer. He got an explanation that would run through his mind several times over the next few hours, "You're right. Unfortunately, it wasn't the current government, and what you call a subway railroad would rather scare most people these days."

Ravi abruptly stopped speaking. With a wave of his hand, he made it clear that the others should wait while he seemed to listen to some noise with his head raised. Then, turning to Brian, he said, "We'll be right there. Please don't be worried. We're getting on the 'subway' now."

Knowing that Ravi could read his thoughts, he now closed them off to others by operating a locking mechanism in his *neocortex*. This worked quite quickly and was only a short autogenic training. In doing so, he imagined a pyramid hanging upside down in his head and rotating counterclockwise. This exercise worked after only a few seconds and was the quickest way for Brian to stop it from entering his head. Years ago, he was proud when he discovered that this exercise was a variation of another activity practiced by meditation teachers. These taught their students that one should imagine in one's mind a rotating octahedron, which had the shape of two pyramids glued together at the base. The octahedron produced

The Sound Trap

a strong energy field as long as one imagined the geometric form while it was rotating in the head. There was only one crucial difference to Brian's unique method. While the octahedron established a connection from the brain to other fields, the upside-down pyramid prevented this connection.

Brian knew very well that this form of self-hypnosis was a powerful tool for manipulating a brain. A beginner should, therefore, always be supervised by a master. While some were able to achieve unique effects after a short time, they were also able to cause damage to their own or others' brains. A fellow student, with whom both Anna and he were in a training group at a course in Freiburg, had given this warning at the beginning with condescending comments. The consequences for the fellow student, who was eager to experiment, were severe. A self-experiment caused short-lived amnesia. Whether this also left permanent damage, no one probably knew. However, the individual was later implicated in a scandal involving the alleged misappropriation of donations to an American foundation for seriously ill children. At the hearing by American law enforcement authorities, this scoundrel could not remember anything that might have to do with irregular donations. After the business magazine Forbes reported on this, Forbes was added to the list of "fake news sheets" by the family of the person concerned. When this was also a topic in all media, Anna and he gave this kind of memory loss the name Pyramid Syndrome.

However, at that time, very few people besides Anna and Brian knew how correct this name was and what it had to do with how many ancient pyramids worked.

However, Brian knew well that he was not entirely free of narcissistic dispositions. At the moment, though, it was not the right time for remorse. He had to concentrate on what was happening to him here in this underground tunnel.

After a few seconds of concentration on the rotating pyramid, the desired effect occurred: he felt alone in his head again. This brought some relaxation. Soon, however, he began to doubt whether this shielding from the outside world might not be a mistake. Kanja

The Sound Trap

seemed to be busy. He had put both hands on the tunnel wall and closed his eyes.

On the other hand, Ravi's face immediately revealed that he had noticed Brian's shielding. His face radiated a subtle smile as he said, "I understand you very well, but for now, you must trust us. When we reach our destination, you will understand everything."

"How much longer will it take ... I mean, when will we get to our destination?"

"You've mastered the most amazing tricks with your brain, but you're missing the point. Look at your wristwatch. Do you notice anything?"

Brian's face must have contorted into a frightened grimace as he read off the time. It was already 9 o'clock the next day after his accident. How could that be? Ravi immediately recognized the shock on his face and said, "Now, maybe you understand why we have to hurry. Your watch should still be showing the time in Malta at the moment. This runs many times faster than here. We can sort this out later, but your return will be harder to explain with every minute of discussion."

That's reassuring. The men probably assume that I will return, Brian thought. A glance at Ravi, who was now smiling at him, immediately made it clear that he probably couldn't prevent the intrusion into his head after all. Before consciousness faded, he could think for a second: *what strong people they must be if my meditation tricks hardly have any effect.*

Regaining consciousness, he lay in a single-axle cart on a quilted blanket. The carriage was pulled by a donkey, whose strong smell of manure could be smelled despite the light breeze. His back and everything he thought belonged to his body ached. Next to the cart walked Kanja, and the donkey did not need any instruction to find its destination.

"Are you all right?" Kanja asked, but he didn't expect an answer and said, "You fainted when we left the tunnel. Don't worry about it. There's nothing wrong with your head. Next time it will be easier for you to go through the gate. You don't need to ask me about it. I

The Sound Trap

don't know much about the principle of operation. You'll have more time to deal with it later."

"Where did Ravi go?"

"He's already gone ahead. We'll be right there, too."

"Oh, I guess he took the subway and rode 1st class?"

"Never heard that there is 1st class on the subway. Although, people can be trusted to do that," Kanja said, and it seemed like he meant it. Brian was unsettled: *didn't Kanja understand my joke? Sure, he did. He probably wanted to tell me that he may be old but not unworldly.*

The swaying became less because the reddish-brown sandy path ended, and the cart had turned onto an asphalt road. The donkey knew the destination already because it suddenly went faster and faster. They were getting closer to a town, and less than five minutes later, they spotted Ravi standing on the left side of the road next to a minivan waiting for them. He signaled Brian to get in the passenger seat. Before getting in, Brian recognized from the license plate of the fairly new-looking Mitsubishi that they were in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. Sitting behind the wheel, Ravi looked completely transformed despite his dirty caftan and worn sandals as he moved the vehicle as if it were the most natural thing in the world. But Ravi's glimpse of the road and the ease with which the car was steered did not reassure Brian. Doubts arose about whether all drivers in this country had been taught that left-hand traffic was the rule. In any case, Ravi sometimes drove on one side and sometimes on the other. Hard to say if it was to avoid the potholes or for different reasons. While Brian clung to each bend in the road in anticipation of oncoming traffic suddenly appearing, Ravi's face beamed as if it were a special blessing to be behind the wheel.

"I guess you thought the old man could only meditate and didn't know anything about technology, huh?" As he said this, he looked at Brian, not the road. Brian was already thinking about whether it would have been safer in the donkey cart. The animal, following its instincts, would dodge any traffic. As if sensing Brian's concerns, Ravi responded again, saying, "You know, it's time you got to know

The Sound Trap

our culture better. We don't just trust ourselves because we've learned that our destiny is already written. If something happens, it was meant to happen."

What he heard caused Brian's adrenaline level to shoot up once again. But to his surprise, Ravi said, "I can see my words aren't reassuring you. From now on, I'll drive as if I had a driver's license. But we'll be right there anyway."

Laughing, he actually kept looking at the road now.

Then Brian remembered the time difference. His smartwatch always showed two times. One was the time in his hometown, and the other was in the current time zone. This made it easier to track the daily rhythm of his friends in Washington. His navigation app showed the ancient, ruined city of Mandu in India as the current location. This was in the Vindhya Mountains, and various points of interest were marked as places to visit. After a few minutes with his mind on Washington, he asked Ravi, "Does the problem with time moving at different speeds still exist here?"

"No. You experience this phenomenon only in the holes in the earth and transport tunnels, with the help of which you came here. And only when they are on the energetic lines of force of the planet. If you move a small distance on it, you can cover a multiple of the distance by trigonometric projection. You must only bring your body into resonance with the rock. That's how it works in the hole in the ground."

Brian doubted that Ravi was familiar with the physics behind this phenomenon and thought: *probably it only described the myth. His teachers must have shown him how to use the tunnel. Anyway, it sounded like what I've seen in Egyptian depictions. At least with the pyramids and temples, the Egyptians could measure time and precisely determine geological and astronomical distances.*

The stay in Freiburg greatly expanded Brian's basic knowledge about such things. Therefore, he also knew that this once belonged to the understanding of the Freemasons and other organizations.

In him, a little doubt spread whether it could be a coincidence that the truth about the ancient knowledge was sometimes so difficult to prove. By now, he knew that many ancient mysteries had

The Sound Trap

been passed down as secret knowledge until modern times. The best examples are the traditions of the Templars and Freemasons. Their handed-down sciences were always so isolated that they have since forgotten much of it. Only their symbols for rituals originating from Egypt, such as the rough stone, the eye, the protractor, and compasses, still testify to the origin and the knowledge of that time.

Perhaps the older man was right, and there are still functioning installations from ancient times.

Curiosity gave him a new power. He said to Ravi, "I need some more time to think about it. But how did I get here to India from Malta now?"

Ravi did not take his eyes off the road as he replied, "With your mind, how else?"

Rarely did Brian experience a situation like this. Instead of bringing certainty, every other answer unsettled him. He could think of nothing that could quickly change this circumstance. Instead, he felt a deep dissatisfaction with himself. Ravi's last answer seemed to be the reason. He had asserted that Brian's thoughts had brought him from Malta to India without hesitation and very firmly. Briefly, he mused that it was all in his head after all. The actual impressions, including the pain in his back, made him quickly reject this idea. But he was also concerned about not being able to see inside Ravi to elicit his knowledge. In his life, things went differently otherwise. When someone asked him for help, for example, to "read" people or distinguish truth from lies, it gave him a sense of control. Control over the current situation and other people. It was not like that on this day. He was now slowly becoming aware that he was losing control. Instead of worrying about possible reasons, Brian focused on current events. His mind refused to accept these mysterious circumstances and realized he was at someone else's mercy. Therefore, he decided to take care of the most critical question: *why India? Who organized this action, and why wasn't I asked?*

There was only one thing that Brian could already answer: they must have believed that he would not have gone voluntarily! And Brian had another certainty as well. He was smart enough to know there is no point in waiting for answers unless you ask the right

The Sound Trap

questions. Here a trusted person could help, and that would be Anna, his meditation teacher in Freiburg.