

See you in Brighton

Love. Loss. Legacy.

Novel

L.L. Barth

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**To Brighton,
to beginnings,
to stories we carry without knowing.**

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Joy

Brighton, Present – *Do you know Brighton? This place is a jewel of the United Kingdom at the southern tip of our beautiful country, right on the English Channel. But it is so much more. Aside from attracting crowds of tourists from home and abroad, Brighton is an inspiring place where history and stories have been and are being written. Why am I telling you this? Because my personal story has been rewritten here. Take a little time and join me on my journey.*

Let's start from the beginning. My name is Joy—yes, just Joy, like happiness. I owe this name to my mother Joe, who is dedicated to the ideals of flower children and only wants to spread love and joy. Her attitude to life today is the same as it was in the 1970s when I was conceived, most likely by Herb, whom I know as my father, but my mother cannot confirm that one hundred percent. According to my life donor, two aspects played an important role in the naming: On the one hand, the name should underline her ideals, and on the other hand, it should start with a "J". In the next few weeks, a lot will become clear to me, including the first letter of my first name. This is only a small building block that weighed only slightly because of the total mass of information that rained down on me.

To understand my personality, you have to know how I grew up. Our small family lives in a commune in the hinterland of England with a few other aging followers of the hippie philosophy. We have a whole property to ourselves, but no one knows exactly who owns it. The documents have been lost over time. Since no one was interested in the property, we live in complete seclusion and pay homage to our own lifestyle. On the main square of the area there is a run-down but quite intact main house, which houses the premises that serve the community, bathrooms, kitchen and so on. Our living huts are grouped around the house, surrounded by a large garden where vegetables and fruit and all kinds of other things are planted. We are mostly self-sufficient, but some things, such as electricity or gas, have to be paid for with real money, so we have a small flourishing business running. The flower children sell homemade handicrafts, such as hanging baskets, pots, and all kinds of other knick-knacks to tourists, who flock to this place of the past. A few years ago, the hippie village was considered an insider tip in the Lonely Planet, but now "Hippala", as the place is called, is part of the standard program of an interested visitor to the United Kingdom.

The residents can pay the bills from this income, although the vile mammon itself is not important according to its own philosophy. "Possessions are not the central element of our existence, my child. The only thing that counts is love." This maxim was drilled into

me by my mother and the other inhabitants of Hippala. But I see it differently, I'm ambitious, I like exquisite things, that means quality of life for me. I wear Designer fashion, enjoy delicious food in exclusive restaurants, and like to stay in upscale hotels.

Joe, as my mother wants to be called, is unique. She detests her baptismal name Josepha: "That sounds so Teutonic". She liked to suppress the fact that she was born in Vienna and had spent her first years of life there.

I have not lived in Hippala for many years, but in feudal London and run my own art gallery. You didn't expect that, did you? I'll tell the story of how it came about later. Because recently something happened that has shaken up my life so far and the view of myself and my roots. A few weeks ago, my business partner Toby came to our gallery completely distraught. He carried a large package under one arm and waved his other hand excitedly through the air. The waving was accompanied by hectic exclamations of my name. "Joy, Joy, Joy! You won't believe your eyes." Since Toby was generally prone to exaggeration, I wasn't particularly surprised. However, I had never seen him so distraught, and so I snatched the package out of his hand. The package was wrapped with wrapping paper, which was torn in some places and already scuffed. It smelled musty and I quickly realized that it must be something old. I was so excited to learn what was hidden in this mysterious package that I hurriedly tore down the remains of the paper.

After the contents were finally exposed, I held a painting in my hands that made me freeze with bewilderment. I looked at a portrait that made me feel like I was looking into a mirror. It showed a painted portrait of a woman who looked the same as me! I turned and turned the picture, the woman seemed to be following me with her large violet-blue eyes. The art connoisseur in me paid tribute to the painter. I looked at the portrait more closely, the painter had captured the fine features of the woman excellently, her eyes shone with happiness, the black hair framed her delicate face, and the porcelain skin shimmered in the sunlight. In the corner of the picture, I read the signature: Thalysis, Jan. 1928. While I was holding the picture in my hands and didn't know exactly what to think of it, a small, yellowed piece of paper fell to the floor. I picked it up and read the message that was immortalized on it: "See you in Brighton."

Josephine

Vienna, 1927 - "I'll tell you again! You have no talent for acting! Look for a man who can feed you, one who can put up with you. With what you've shown, you're certainly not going to pursue a career and certainly won't make your living," the theatre director of the suburban theatre in Hernals snapped at the young woman, who had just auditioned for a small role.

Josephine Winter endured the abuse without impression, convinced that the man was subject to a fatal error. She would show him; she would become the greatest actress ever! With her head held high, she left the small theatre and walked away confidently. It was already the seventh rejection within a few weeks, but Josephine didn't care. She had set her mind on becoming a respected artist. First, she would conquer the stages of Vienna and from there switch to the medium of film. There she was able to reach a larger audience, earn a lot of money, and achieve worldwide fame. That and nothing less was Josephine's ambition.

The young woman walked the long way from the outskirts of Hernals back to her home district of Leopoldstadt. In the meantime, her employer, the milliner, had arrived at home and had announced with great noise the immediate dismissal of the unreliable worker in absentia.

When Josephine finally arrived home after the long march, her mother was already waiting impatiently for her. Filled with shame after the unpleasant visit of the milliner, she gave free rein to her anger and showered her daughter with a violent thunderstorm. "Where have you been, Josephine?" Jarmilla yelled at her daughter. As always when she was upset, her Bohemian accent became even more distinct, and every word seemed to vibrate with anger. "You have no more work!" she screamed, her voice cracking with anger and disappointment. "It was so hard to find a decent job for you and what are you doing? You throw everything away—you ungrateful brat! What's wrong with you?"

Josephine struggled to hide a smile of relief. At last, she was rid of the unloved work. "What's there to smile about?" Jarmilla snapped at her, pouring out all her indignation and displeasure on her younger daughter. Josephine endured her mother's sharp words in silence, while her thoughts had long since slipped away into another world. She would make it – she would conquer the stages of this world, the film, or even better, both. "What is to become of you, Josephine?" complained the mother, discouraged, and perplexed.

"Mom, I'm going to be an actress," Josephine declared confidently and looked at her mother defiantly to check her reaction. As expected, she earned a shocked and incredulous look. "Who put this nonsense into your head?" asked Jarmilla indignantly.

"Nobody put 'nonsense' in my head. I decided that all by myself. I've also introduced myself to some stages. You'll see, Mom, I'm going to be famous, and I'm going to earn a lot of money, and then we can move away from here and buy a villa out there in Döbling. You'll never have to work again, and we'll be fine." Josephine did not doubt for a second that this would happen.

Jarmilla shook her head vigorously, hugged her daughter and stroked her hair, wiping away a few tears with the back of her hand. "Why can't you be a little more like your sister? She's doing her job well, and you'll see that soon she'll get married. The shoemaker Toni has already hinted at it. Then she'll have a few children, they'll be better off than you. They will then have children again, and they will be even better off. Such is the course of life, my child. This is how and not otherwise. We grow up, marry and have children. Then we will grow old and die. That is God's will, that's what the Bible says." That had been a long speech for the otherwise rather taciturn Jarmilla. Josephine doubted that this was written in the Holy Bible but left it at that. In addition, this was apparently the predetermined path for her boring sister, but certainly not hers.

Josephine returned her mother's embrace, a rare expression of tenderness in the household of the three women. Then she left the desperate mother to herself and went into the courtyard of the shanty town. There were no children playing today or women hanging out

their laundry. She was alone and looked around in the gloomy surroundings, the grey facades seemed to crush her.

"I have to get out of here," she muttered to herself and began to run. It was only when she reached the popular Praterstraße, with its noble and exquisite shops, that she slowed down. She looked at the displays, the magnificent dresses, the elegant shoes, and the shining furs. Breathless, she stopped in front of a jeweller's shop and pressed herself close to the window to admire the sparkling treasures. "I'm going to be a famous actress, and then I'll buy the whole store empty," she swore to herself, her eyes glued to the fine pieces of jewellery.

With thoughts of her impending wealth, she returned home full of confidence. The mother and sister were not there, so she had the small apartment to herself. She stood on the wobbly chair and began to practice poses in front of the almost blind mirror above the sink, which she had seen on posters for theatre and film advertisements. She recited texts from the newspaper she had found in the rubbish. She learned them by heart and declaimed them repeatedly until the day came to an end and mother and sister returned.

"So, Josephine wants to be an actress," the older sister teased her as she entered the apartment. "I *WILL* be an actress," she snapped back. "You don't believe that yourself, with your little pale face, no one wants to see that," Johanna hurled venomously in Josephine's direction. "Children, please, can't we spend an evening

without you arguing?" Jarmilla was exhausted, exhausted by the life she led. She was tired of constantly caring for her daughters, and she was tired of the two of them arguing again and again. She was relieved that Johanna would soon move out to start her own family. "I have a beautiful face, not a potato nose like you," Josephine continued to poison in the direction of her sister. She posed and recited the texts she had memorized in the afternoon. "And you want to be successful with that?" Johanna mocked and aped her.

"I'm going to be the greatest and most successful actress ever. You will see what a success I will be. And then, when you admire me on the highest stages and on the biggest screens, you will be sorry for having mocked me!"

Present

"Where did you get this materialistic attitude from? Certainly not from me! And certainly not from your father," my mother complained when I visited her and wore some expensive designer dress again. I grinned at her, hugged her to me, stroked her grey curly hair, and answered, "Dearest Joe, these are certainly the genes of a time-honoured ancestor who are now seeking their perfection in me." "Don't be so silly. You don't joke with things like that," my mother forbade any further statement that was heretical in her eyes. I love coming to Hippala, I love my parents, and so I like to listen to the sermon about their ideas and my reprehensible consumerist attitude. But then I'm happy and relieved to return to my luxurious life in London, enjoy my expensive achievements and enjoy my chic loft apartment in the trendy Vyner Street district of Hackney in exciting East London.

Until a few years ago, this part of London was a rather unpopular corner in the otherwise elite capital. But then hipsters and all kinds of in-people began to settle there, chic galleries opened their doors, restaurants with exotic names and even more exotic dishes grew like mushrooms out of the ground. Thus, my formerly fucked up but cozy neighbourhood became one of the hippest places for people who valued status. Hackney and I have evolved together, and now the

neighbourhood perfectly reflects the Joy I always wanted to be.

Many years ago, when Hackney was still considered a taboo area, I opened a small art gallery on Vyner Street. The reputation of the area was not important to me at the time, it had been a pragmatic decision, because at that time there were still affordable business premises, and that's why I didn't realize my dream in noble Mayfair, but right here.

For as long as I can remember, I have been involved with art in all its multifaceted forms. It all started in Hippala, where we passed the time painting and doing crafts, producing unique artistic pieces and incomparable works of art. Every inhabitant of Hippala had a special talent, from sculptor to painter. For the Hippalas, the works were a form of meditation, and they had no intention of earning "vile mammon" with it. I, however, stood at the roadside at the tender age of ten and offered our workpieces for sale. At that time, the hippie commune was not yet a tourist hotspot, but passing travellers probably felt sorry for the child in the patched dungarees and bought the items from me. At that time, I developed a sense of what was easy to sell and what would become a slow seller. Nevertheless, I had usually succeeded in selling almost all the objects.

The older I got, the more critical I became and only took those works to my street sales that I considered worthwhile. I then sold them for good money because I was able to convince the buyers that these works of art

would experience a considerable increase in value over the years. Which, by the way, also happened, if you search for Hippala art on the Internet search engine of your choice, you will be amazed.

I had found my calling. The desire to learn more about art was strengthened in me. I became obsessed with everything that concerned artistic creation: art history, masterpieces of art and, ultimately, the trade in art objects. I bought books, subscribed magazines, invested in expensive illustrated books, and devoured everything I could get my hands on. I visited exhibitions, museum tours and took part in art tours. I financed all this through the sales of the Hippala art because I had negotiated a substantial commission. As mentioned earlier, money is not crucial for a happy life for the Hippalas. For me, on the other hand, it is a pleasure to earn and spend money.

So, I literally grew out of the old hippie clothes and into the art world. Despite their hippie-like anti-establishment views, my parents had sent me to a public school and not taught in the commune themselves. I was fortunate that one of my lecturers, Mr. Hollingsworth, showed great understanding of my interest in art and art history and encouraged me accordingly. We often sat together after class, and I bombarded him with questions, all of which he patiently answered.

In the last year of school, he took me aside and asked the question that every student dreaded: "What do you want to do after school?" I swallowed, because my

deepest desire to study art history seemed so far away that I didn't even dare to think the thought through to the end – let alone say it out loud. How could a hippie kid like me expect to be accepted to a university? I pressed around, and Mr. Hollingsworth gave me time to answer. "I'd like to study art history," I finally blurted out. "Well, was that so hard?" The teacher smiled. "I also think that you should aim to study art at a prestigious institution. What do you think of Cambridge?"

That was exactly what I had hoped for! But how could Mr. Hollingsworth put such nonsense into my head? A child from a poor background was unable to afford the sum that it cost to study at an elite university. "There is a scholarship that is given to gifted students every year, and I signed you up for it. I hope you don't mind?" He winked. I threw my arms around his neck impetuously, which was unseemly and a most embarrassing expression of feeling for Englishmen. That's probably where my Austrian blood and temperament came through, which I got from my mother's side.

My mother Joe, then still Josepha, came from Vienna, but when the whole mess with the Nazis started, she had come from Austria to England on one of the last Kindertransport. And this despite the fact that the Viennese relatives were not Jewish at all. Little Josepha was shipped to a childless couple in northern England, where she was supposed to wait for the end of the Second World War and for her to return to Vienna. But

in one of the last bombings of Vienna, her entire family had been wiped out, and so she was stuck in England at the tender age of four. But she was lucky to have found a host family that little Joe had taken to her heart. So, she stayed there and grew up like an Englishwoman, couldn't even remember the German language, let alone her hometown of Vienna, except for a few bits. Nevertheless, she liked to call herself Austrian, as that seemed more exotic than giving northern England as her country of origin and tried to pass on the little, she remembered to me. This included some Viennese words, mainly sayings such as "Passt scho!" or "Mei, des is a G'schicht", which we incorporate into our conversations for fun. Not to forget the legendary Viennese charm, which she taught me to use in a targeted manner.

Back to the study support in Cambridge that I was promised. I could not believe my luck and was firmly convinced that I deserved this scholarship and would certainly receive it. However, it was not quite that simple.

I was invited to a first meeting at the university. In the best possible clothing that I thought was appropriate, at that time my sense of style was not yet very pronounced, and you could see the origin of my outfit from cheap stores, I set off. The other candidates for the promotion were dressed much more dignified than I, the uncultured hippie girl. In addition, I stood out with my distinctive dialect. I spoke with a hard northern English