

Barbara Honigmann
Strasbourg, December 24th

Translated by Ivan Parra Garcia and Lauren Beck

My husband is called Peter, my sons are called Jo and Ru, and our cat is called Atze. Miss Atze.

Our street is a small street on the edge of downtown Strasbourg next to the new development called Esplanade. There is not one tree or one shrub in the street, and it is not at all quiet; rather, cars drive through perpetually, even if you don't know where to. Across from our house there is a France Télécom building, the ugliest building in all of Strasbourg, the second ugliest one being our house, but we don't notice it anymore, because we have been living here for so long. Our children grew up on this street, Jo has since moved out, Ru is rarely seen, and I have never lived in an apartment as long as in this one; sometimes, it is a little frightening, this duration.

1984 is when we moved here, we had come from East Berlin, and whenever we are asked why we didn't just move to West Berlin, we explain that we are a Jewish family and we were looking for a connection to a Jewish life that does not exist in Germany.

Beyond that we were simply looking for variation, a change, and maybe even a little bit of an adventure, and we found it, too, so much so that we are still exhausted today. Besides the adventure of the foreign language, it mainly consists of life between the countries, the worlds, the cultures, each of which we participate in on the margins. A difficult balancing act, in which you can easily fall between all stools.

The small sketches gathered here were originally columns written for the *Basler Zeitung*. They appeared there between 1991 and 1996 in supplement "3," the newspaper for the tri-state region on the Upper Rhine between France, Germany, and Switzerland. They are a bit of a chronicle of our life here, from the time when my sons changed from boys into young men. Today is December 24th, Christmas for most people on our street, but for us it is an ordinary day. For the Turkish man on the corner it is also an ordinary day. Just now I got milk and mineral water from him. An odd clientele had assembled there, non-Christians, marginals, and lonely hearts.