

SERDILLAND

Novella



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PROLOGUE – Serdilland

Midnight in Berlin-Mitte. The streets glisten with the last summer rain, and the lights from the bars cast long, flickering shadows across the cobblestones. The city feels as though it has lain down for a moment to breathe—yet this is precisely the hour when Merdan’s world begins to pulse.

He stands alone in his bar, **Serdilland**, studying the room as if it were a living creature. The walls are dark, almost black, but not threatening—more like a curtain shielding a stage. Photographs hang everywhere: faces that once looked at him before he captured them. Some laugh, some cry, some carry a secret only he knows.

Serdilland is no ordinary bar. It exists only three nights a week: **Thursday, Friday, Saturday. From midnight until noon.** A rhythm so strange it becomes natural—at least for those who know Merdan.

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Merdan Serhed, twenty-six, six foot one, with a face that becomes dangerous for women. His eyes are the color of dark honey, and his smile is a promise he never intends to keep. He wears a simple black shirt, sleeves rolled up, his hands calm as if they were accustomed to silence.

He is a bartender, yes. But in truth, he is an **artist of living**—a man who doesn’t plan life, but composes it. Who doesn’t work to live, but lives to feel. For him, every night is a painting, every guest a brushstroke, every drink a small act of art.

Being an artist of life means refusing to settle. He collects impressions instead of possessions. He lives in a loft that is at once home, photo studio, and refuge. Plants grow there even though he never waters them. Vinyl records lie around, chosen

purely by instinct. Hundreds of portraits hang on the walls—photographs he sells online but never truly lets go of.

He loves people, but never permanently. Women drift in and out like the nights themselves. Extravagant women who fascinate him, challenge him, sometimes try to break him. Some stay longer than a night, some want to stay forever—but Merdan belongs to no one. Not even to himself.

Now, moments before opening, Serdilland is quiet. The air smells of citrus and wood, of fresh mint and the faint promise of a long night. Merdan steps behind the bar, touches the bottles like old friends. He mixes a drink for himself—not to drink, but to test. A ritual that steadies him.

He thinks of the nights ahead. Of the stories that will unfold without him seeking them. Of the women who will look at him as if he were the answer to a question they never dared to ask. Of the men who will share their worries because he listens without speaking.

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Serdilland is a stage. And Merdan is the man who brings it to life.

When the clock strikes **00:00**, he opens the door. The night enters. And with it, the story begins.

1 – Berlin at Night

Berlin-Mitte never sleeps, but just after midnight its breath changes. The sounds soften, voices sink deeper, footsteps slow. It is the hour when the city reveals its second skin—the one only seen by those who stay awake long enough to witness it.

The street where Serdilland sits is a narrow, vibrating corridor of light and shadow. Bars line up like pearls on a string, each

with its own rhythm, its own scent, its own story. Some are loud, crowded, glaring. Others are quiet, almost meditative. But none are like Serdilland.

Merdan Serhed opens the door of his bar and steps out onto the sidewalk. He loves this moment—the transition between silence and storm. The air is cool, a trace of rain still lingering, and the streetlights cast golden circles onto the asphalt. A taxi passes, a bicycle bell rings, someone laughs too loudly somewhere down the street. Berlin, as always.

He leans against the doorframe and watches the street. The first guests never arrive right away. Serdilland is a secret that has spread, but not one that reveals itself to everyone. It is a place for those who refuse to sleep because they know the night has more to tell than the day.

Merdan pulls a cigarette from his breast pocket, lights it, and inhales deeply. He rarely smokes, but sometimes he needs this small ritual to ground himself. The flame reflects in his eyes, and for a moment he looks like a man who has lost something—or is searching for something.

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A couple walks by, hand in hand, laughing. They glance at the bar, pause. “Is this new?” the woman asks. “No,” the man says. “But the opening hours are... strange.” Merdan smiles. “Strange is good,” he murmurs.

He steps back inside. The bar is warm now, the lights dimmed, the music a soft pulse. Serdilland is not a place for loud beats or cheap drinks. It is a room that collects stories. The counter is dark wood, smooth and heavy. The shelves behind it are filled with bottles whose labels carry tales from all over the world.

Merdan begins polishing glasses. Not because they’re dirty, but because he likes the motion. It calms him, brings him into

the rhythm of the night. He doesn't work like a bartender—he works like an artist preparing his stage.

Shortly after half past one, the door opens. A man enters, tall, wearing a coat far too expensive for this street. He nods at Merdan. “The usual?” Merdan asks. “The usual.”

The man sits at the bar, and Merdan mixes the drink only this guest ever orders: gin, basil, a hint of chili, a drop of honey. A drink that burns and heals at the same time.

“Tough week?” Merdan asks. The man chuckles softly. “You have no idea.” “Oh, I do,” Merdan says. “I hear more than you think.”

The door opens again. Two women step inside, extravagantly dressed, as if on their way to a fashion show. They give Merdan a look that is both curious and dangerous. He knows that look. He knows exactly what it means.

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The night begins to fill. Voices, laughter, music, the clinking of ice in the shaker. Serdiland awakens.

Merdan moves behind the bar like a dancer. Every gesture fluid, precise, elegant. He speaks little, but when he does, people listen. He has that kind of presence—one that doesn't need to be loud to take up space.

Outside, Berlin is wild, chaotic, unpredictable. Inside Serdiland, Berlin becomes a cosmos of stories that unfold only here.

And Merdan is their silent conductor.

The night is young. And it belongs to him.

2 – The Bartender Who Doesn't Sleep

When Berlin slowly dreams its way into morning, **Merdan Serhed's real shift begins.** Midnight to noon—an

unimaginable time frame for most people, but for him the most natural rhythm in the world. He lives against the clock, against habit, against fatigue. And in that defiance lies his freedom.

Serdilland is full now. The music is a soft, pulsing heartbeat holding the room together. Guests move in a kind of choreographed chaos: laughter, whispers, the clinking of ice cubes, the scraping of barstools. Merdan stands in the middle of it all, yet never in the way. He is the invisible center—the man who keeps everything together without ever trying to control it.

He doesn't work like a bartender mixing drinks. He works like an artist composing moods. Every cocktail is a small ritual. He chooses ingredients not by recipe but by instinct. Basil for the nervous. Chili for the brave. Honey for the wounded. Mint for those who want to forget.

His hands move quickly, but never frantically. He shakes, pours, stirs, garnishes—everything with an elegance one would expect on a stage. Some guests come just to watch him. Others come to be saved by him.

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Merdan rarely sleeps. And when he does, it's never for long. He says sleep is like a bad movie: you don't miss anything if you stop halfway. His energy comes from the night, from the people, from the stories that confide in him without being asked.

A woman with silver earrings sits at the bar. She looks as if she has fallen out of another decade—hair pinned up, lips dark red, eyes full of questions. "You're Merdan, right?" He nods. "They say you make drinks that solve problems." "Sometimes," he says. "Sometimes they create new ones."

She smiles. "I'll take the risk."

He mixes her a drink that tastes like summer, even though autumn waits outside. She takes a sip, closes her eyes, and for a moment looks as if she has found something she lost long ago.

Merdan watches her—not out of interest, but out of habit. He reads people the way others read books. He sees sadness in a smile, fear in a gesture, longing in a glance. Maybe that’s why women fall for him. He sees them—truly. And that is dangerous.

Around three in the morning, the bar grows louder. The night is in full bloom now. A DJ Merdan likes starts playing spontaneously. Guests dance between tables, drinks flow faster, conversations deepen. Serdilland transforms into a place that is both wild and intimate.

Merdan remains calm. He is the fixed point in the chaos. He knows every bottle, every guest, every look. He knows when someone has had too much, when someone needs to talk, when someone wants to be left alone.

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At five in the morning, a regular walks in—an older man with a gray beard and a voice that sounds like whiskey. “Merdan,” he says, “you’re the only reason I’m still awake.” Merdan smiles. “Then stay awake.”

The man sits down, and Merdan places a drink in front of him without asking. They don’t talk much. They don’t need to. Some friendships are made of silence.

As the first rays of sunlight crawl through the windows, the mood shifts. The night softens, people grow quieter. Some guests leave, others stay as if trying to delay the morning.

Merdan loves this transition. The night doesn’t die—it merely falls asleep. And the day that begins belongs entirely to him.

Around eleven, an hour before closing, Serdilland is almost empty. Merdan wipes the counter, puts away glasses, returns bottles to their places. He doesn't look tired. More like content.

He lives for these hours. For the nights that write stories. For the people who come and go. For the drinks that are more than alcohol.

He is the bartender who doesn't sleep. The man who holds the night until the day replaces him.

And tomorrow—or rather, tonight—it all begins again.

3 – The Women of the Nights

There are nights when Serdilland feels like a magnet. Not because of the drinks, not because of the music, not because of the atmosphere—but because of **Merdan**. The women who appear here are not ordinary visitors. They are extravagant, loud, luminous, like characters from a film that was never made. Some wear dresses that reveal more than they hide, others outfits that look like works of art. Each of them brings a story, and each hopes Merdan will read it.

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On this Thursday, it begins around two in the morning. The door opens, and three women enter as if they were a storm announcing itself. High heels, shimmering fabrics, perfume that hangs in the air like a promise. They laugh before they even order a drink.

Merdan sees them, but he doesn't stare. He has a kind of restraint that makes women curious. He gives them a smile that is neither inviting nor dismissive—a smile that says: *I see you. But I don't belong to you.*

The women sit at the bar. The first, wearing emerald earrings, leans forward. “You’re Merdan, right?” “Depends on who’s asking.” She laughs. “A woman who needs a drink.”

He mixes her something fresh, something light, something that matches her gaze. She takes a sip and closes her eyes. “Wow.” “That’s the goal,” he says.

The second woman, dressed in silver threads, looks at him as if she wants to undress him—not physically, but emotionally. “They say you’re dangerous.” Merdan raises an eyebrow. “Only for those who want to stay.” She smiles. “I never stay.” “Then we’re safe.”

The third woman is quieter. She watches him as if studying him. Her eyes are dark, almost black, carrying a secret no one could solve. “What do you photograph?” she asks suddenly. Merdan pauses. “People.” “Why?” “Because they reveal themselves when they think no one is watching.” She nods slowly, as if she understands.

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The night grows denser. The bar fills further, but the three women remain the center—not because of their volume, but because of the way they look at Merdan. He moves between them and the other guests, yet always returns to them, like a dancer finding his starting point.

Around four in the morning, the mood intensifies. The emerald woman places her hand on his. “Come home with us.” Merdan smiles gently and withdraws his hand. “I never go with groups.” “Then just with me.” “Not tonight.”

She looks hurt, but not surprised. Women like her are used to men chasing them—not to men standing still.

The silver woman tries a different approach. “I could make you happy.” Merdan shakes his head. “I’m already happy.” “Alone?” “Alone isn’t the opposite of happy.”

The third woman says nothing. She only watches him. And that is what makes him nervous. Women who stay silent are more dangerous than those who shout.

As the first guests leave, the three remain. The emerald woman becomes clingy, the silver one jealous, the quiet one more intense. Merdan knows this pattern. It always starts harmless—and rarely ends that way.

“Why don’t you want anyone?” the quiet woman finally asks. Merdan leans back. “I want people. Just not forever.” “Why?” “Because I lose myself when I stay.”

She looks at him for a long moment. “Maybe you want to lose yourself.” “Maybe,” he says. “But not tonight.”

The women eventually leave—but not willingly. They leave because Merdan makes it clear that Serdilland is a place for nights, not attachments. A place for stories, not promises.

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When the door closes behind them, Merdan exhales deeply. He loves women. He loves their energy, their beauty, their complexity. But he loves his freedom more. And every night reminds him that both rarely coexist.

He wipes the counter as if it were a mirror showing him who he is: A man desired. A man who doesn’t stay. A man who loves the night—and the night loves him back.

Yet deep inside, he knows: One day, a woman will come who doesn’t leave. And when she does, Serdilland will never be the same again.

4 – The Studio

If Serdilland is the stage of Merdan’s nights, then his studio is the temple of his days. A place that doesn’t sleep, even when

he does. A room that smells of coffee, dust, old wood, and the quiet mystery of a hundred captured souls.

The studio lies only a few streets away from the bar, tucked into a courtyard one easily overlooks unless one knows what to search for. The door is unremarkable—gray, scratched, carrying marks that could tell stories. But once you open it, you step into a world that has nothing to do with Berlin-Mitte.

The space is large, open, with high ceilings and windows that let the morning light pour in like liquid gold. Plants stand everywhere—some alive, some half-dead, some grown so wildly they resemble small jungles. Merdan rarely waters them, yet they thrive. Perhaps because they sense that this place is a home for anything that wants to grow.

Portraits cover the walls. Hundreds of them. Some large, some small, some in black and white, others in colors almost too intense. Faces of strangers, regulars, women who loved him, men who shared their worries with him. Each picture is a fragment of a story Merdan refuses to forget. 11

He enters the studio after every shift, no matter how late it is. Today it's just past noon. The sun is high, but Merdan doesn't feel tired. He takes off his jacket, turns on the music—soft, melancholic, a song that sounds like a breath—and walks to his worktable.

The table is chaotic, but not messy. Cameras lie there, lenses, notebooks, pens, a scratched phone he never uses. He sits down, picks up a camera, and studies it as if it were a living creature.

Photography isn't a hobby for Merdan. It's a way of understanding the world. People reveal themselves differently when they stand in front of his lens. They lose their masks, their roles, their lies. For a moment, they become true. And Merdan loves truths that are not spoken.

He scrolls through the photos he took last week. A man with sad eyes who always sits alone in Serdilland. A woman with a laugh too loud to be real. A couple kissing without loving.

Then he stops at one image. A portrait of a woman he photographed two nights ago. Dark eyes, a quiet gaze, a secret that follows him. She was one of the three women who surrounded him—the silent one, the dangerous one.

He zooms in. Her pupils reflect a light that didn't come from Serdilland. A light that came from within her.

"Who are you?" he murmurs. No answer. Only a picture.

Merdan stands and walks to the wall where the most important portraits hang. The wall he calls the **Heartline**. There hang the images of people who touched him—not physically, but soulfully. He looks at them for a long time.

An old man who once told him: *"You're a mirror, Merdan. People see themselves in you."* A woman he never kissed but never forgot. A boy he photographed before he disappeared.

Merdan touches the frames as if they were skin. "You're all here," he says quietly. "And I'm still on my way."

He sits again, takes his camera, and begins to work. He edits photos, deletes others, arranges new series. His hands move quickly but never frantically. He works like a man who knows that art doesn't appear when forced—but when given space.

By afternoon, he puts the camera down and walks to a shelf holding printed photographs. He picks one up. A self-portrait. He is younger in it, maybe twenty. The eyes are the same, but the gaze is different—more open, more vulnerable.

"You had no idea," he says to his younger self. "I still don't," he answers himself.

He laughs softly.

The studio is his refuge. His mirror. His memory. Here he is not the bartender who seduces women. Not the man who commands the night. Not the life-artist everyone admires.

Here he is simply **Merdan**. A man who collects people. A man who loves freedom but sometimes suffers from it. An artist who doesn't know whether he is running or searching.

As the sun slowly sinks, he turns off the light. He takes his jacket, closes the door, and steps outside.

The night is waiting. Serdilland is waiting. And Merdan—he is ready for the next story.

5 – The Artist of Life

Merdan Serhed was never a man who fit into a box. Even as a child, he had the habit of doing things differently. While his friends played football, he watched the people on the playground. While others made plans, he drifted. And while many wondered who they might become, Merdan wondered who he already was.

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He was an artist of life—long before he knew there was a word for it.

An artist of life is not a profession, not a role, not a title. It is an attitude. A way of seeing the world. A way of carrying oneself. An artist of life doesn't follow rules, but rhythms. He doesn't obey calendars, but feelings. He doesn't seek safety, but meaning.

For Merdan, being an artist of life means:

- Placing freedom above everything, even when it becomes lonely.
- Seeing beauty where others see routine.

- Reading people without judging them.
- Collecting moments instead of possessions.
- Living nights instead of planning days.
- Creating art without needing to call himself an artist.

He doesn't live to arrive. He lives to stay in motion.

His Origins

Merdan was born in Berlin, but his roots reach far east—into Kurdistan, a land he knows only through stories. His parents came to Germany as young adults, full of hope and fear. They worked hard, built a life that was stable, safe, reliable.

Merdan loved them, but he was different. His father often said: *"You're like water. No one can hold you."* His mother said: *"You'll find your way, even if it isn't straight."*

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He carried those words into his life. And he lived them.

His Everyday Life as an Artist of Living

Merdan's days begin when others sleep. After every shift in Serdilland, he goes to his studio, drinks coffee, listens to music, takes photos—or simply sits and thinks. He has no routines, only rituals. No plans, only longings.

He loves walking through Berlin, especially early in the morning, when the city hasn't yet decided who it will be today. He loves watching people—not out of curiosity, but out of respect. Every person is a universe worth observing.

He loves silence. Not out of shyness, but conviction. Words are like colors: you should use them only when you intend to paint.

His Relationships

Women are a chapter of their own. Merdan attracts them like light attracts moths. Not because he tries, but because he radiates a kind of freedom that is rare. Women sense that he is different. That he doesn't play. That he doesn't lie. That he doesn't promise.

And that is precisely the problem.

Many fall in love with him. He rarely falls in love. And if he does, it lasts only a night.

He is not a man who breaks hearts. He is a man who touches hearts—and then moves on. Some women understand that. Some don't. Some want to possess him. Some want to save him. Some want to destroy him.

But Merdan remains Merdan. A man who loves without binding. A man who gives without taking. A man who leaves without running. 15

His Art

Photography is not a hobby for him—it is a language. He photographs people because they tell him stories without speaking. He photographs faces because they carry truths words often hide.

His portraits are raw, honest, intense. Some people cry when they see themselves in his images. Others laugh. Some are startled. Some fall in love with themselves.

Merdan sells his photos online, but money means little to him. He lives from the bar, but he exists through art.

His Conflict

Being an artist of life means freedom. But freedom has a price.

Merdan knows he sometimes loses himself. That he sometimes wonders if he is too alone. That he sometimes feels the nights growing heavier. That he sometimes suspects he might be searching for something—something he cannot name.

But he also knows: If he settles, he loses himself. If he stays, he stops living. If he binds himself, he loses his art.

He is an artist of life. And artists of life do not live by rules. They live by truth.

The Evening Begins

As the sun sets, Merdan stands at the window of his studio. He watches the lights of Berlin flicker on. He feels the night calling him. He takes his jacket, closes the door, and steps out. 16

Serdilland is waiting. The people are waiting. The stories are waiting.

And Merdan—he is ready to become the man the night needs once again.

6 – The Bar as a Stage

Serdilland was never just a bar. For most guests, it was a refuge, a secret, a place where the night took on a different meaning. For Merdan, however, it was more: a stage. A room where people revealed themselves without knowing they were being watched. A place where stories weren't told—they were lived.

On this Friday, the night begins quietly. The streets outside are damp from summer rain, and the lights reflect on the asphalt like liquid neon. Merdan opens the door, and a warm scent of

wood, citrus, and fresh mint drifts outward. The bar is ready. So is he.

The First Guests

Shortly after midnight, a man enters—someone Merdan has known for months. A musician who always wears the same leather jacket, and whose eyes reveal he has lived more than he will ever say.

“Merdan,” he says, “I need something strong.” “Strong or honest?” The man laughs. “Honest is stronger.”

Merdan mixes him a drink that tastes of smoke and spices. The musician takes a sip and closes his eyes, as if drinking a memory.

Then a couple enters. They argue quietly but intensely. Their hands don’t touch, but their eyes do. Merdan sees immediately that they love each other—but don’t know how. 17

“Two drinks?” he asks. The woman nods. The man stays silent.

Merdan mixes them something gentle, something conciliatory. Sometimes a drink is a conversation one cannot have.

The Stage Fills

By two o’clock, Serdilland is full. The music is a soft pulse holding the room together. Guests move like characters in a play no one wrote. Some laugh, some whisper, some dance between tables as if they were alone.

Merdan watches them all. Not out of curiosity, but habit. He knows the roles people play at night:

- The lost ones, hoping to find themselves in a drink.

- The loud ones, trying to drown their silence.
- The beautiful ones, aware they are being seen.
- The lonely ones, hoping someone notices.
- The seekers, unaware of what they seek.

And then there are those who come only because of Merdan.

The Woman in the Golden Dress

Tonight, it is a woman in a golden dress. She enters as if she owns the night. Her walk is slow, controlled, almost hypnotic. Her eyes do not search—they choose. And they choose Merdan.

She sits at the bar without asking. “You’re Merdan.” “Depends on who’s asking.” “A woman who knows what she wants.” “Then I am.”

18

She smiles—a smile that doesn’t flirt but challenges. “Make me something that surprises me.”

Merdan mixes her a drink he rarely makes: pomegranate, chili, dark rum, a hint of lavender. A drink that burns and heals at the same time.

She takes a sip. “Interesting.” “Good or bad?” “Interesting is better than good.”

Merdan likes her immediately. Not because of her looks, but because of her calm. Women like her are rare—women who don’t try to impress, but simply *are*.

The Stage Tilts

But the night doesn’t stay calm. Around three, a group of young men enters—loud, reckless, full of energy that smells

like trouble. They order shots, speak too loudly, bump into chairs. Merdan watches them without judging. He knows nights sometimes tilt.

One of the men bumps into the musician. “Watch it, old man!” The musician looks at him—calm, but tired. “I’m not your old man.” The guy laughs. “Then don’t act like one.”

Merdan steps between them. “Everything okay here?” The man looks at him. “Who are you?” “The one who decides whether you stay.”

The group falls silent. Merdan has a kind of authority that doesn’t need volume. The man raises his hands. “Alright, boss.” They sit down. The tension dissolves.

The Woman in Gold Watches Him

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She looks at him as if she has just discovered a secret. “You’re different.” “I’m just awake.” “No,” she says. “You’re someone who holds people without holding them.”

Merdan says nothing. Sometimes silence is the most honest answer.

Morning Approaches

By six, the bar grows quieter. The woman in gold stays. The musician stays. The couple stays. The group leaves.

The night softens, conversations deepen, the music fades.

Merdan mixes the last drinks. He smiles, listens, observes. Serdiland is no longer a place—it is a feeling. A room where people forget who they are for a few hours and discover who they might be.

As the first rays of sunlight crawl through the windows, Merdan looks at the woman in gold.

“Staying until noon?” She smiles. “I’ll stay until you leave.”

Merdan feels something he rarely feels: curiosity. Perhaps even danger.

Serdilland had always been a stage. But tonight, Merdan wasn’t just the director. He was part of the play.

7 – The Woman Who Stays

The nights in Serdilland usually follow a familiar rhythm: people arrive, drink, talk, lose themselves, find themselves, and leave again. But on this Saturday, something happens that unsettles the carefully maintained order of Merdan’s world. A woman stays. Not physically— but in his mind.

20

It begins quietly. The bar is full, the music warm, the atmosphere electric. Merdan moves between the guests as he always does—elegant, calm, attentive. He mixes drinks, listens, smiles, stays silent. And then the door opens, and **she** walks in.

The Woman with the Quiet Fire

She is not loud. Not extravagant. Not like the women who usually appear in Serdilland.

Her dress is simple, black. Her hair loosely pinned up. Her gaze clear.

She looks like someone who isn’t searching—someone who already knows. And that unsettles Merdan.

She sits at the bar without looking around. “A glass of water, please.”

Merdan raises an eyebrow. “Water?” “Yes.” “You know you’re in a bar?” “I know I’m thirsty.”

He smiles. A real smile. Not the one he gives everyone else.

He sets the water in front of her. She drinks slowly, as if examining every sip.

“What’s your name?” Merdan asks. “Liya.”

The name stays in his mind like a song you don’t know, but instantly like.

She Watches Him Differently

As the night grows louder, Liya remains quiet. She doesn’t look at Merdan the way other women do—not with desire, not with expectation, not with playfulness. She looks at him as if she were reading him. And that makes him nervous.

21

“You like working here,” she says suddenly. “I don’t work. I live.” “That shows.”

Merdan mixes a drink for a regular, but his gaze keeps drifting back to Liya. She sits there—calm, confident, untouched by the energy of the bar. She is a still point in a vibrating room.

The First Disturbance

Around two in the morning, a man approaches her—tall, loud, drunk.

“Hey, beautiful, wanna dance?”

Liya looks at him. “No.”

The man laughs. “Come on, just one dance.”

Merdan steps in. “She said no.”

The man eyes him. “You mix drinks, man. You don’t decide anything.”

Merdan stays calm. “I decide who stays.”

The man grumbles but leaves.

Liya looks at Merdan. “You don’t have to save me.” “I’m not saving anyone.” “Yes. You’re saving yourself.”

Merdan stays silent. She’s right. And he doesn’t like that.

The Night Deepens

By four o’clock, Serdilland is full of voices, laughter, music. But Merdan hears only Liya.

She speaks little, but what she says is precise. She talks about art, about freedom, about people. Not superficially— with **22** depth.

“You photograph people,” she says. “Yes.” “Because you want to understand them?” “Because I want to see them.” “And who sees you?”

Merdan pauses. No one. Or everyone—but not truly.

She Stays Longer Than Everyone Else

As the first guests leave, Liya remains. She drinks a second glass of water. Then a third.

She doesn’t seem tired. Not bored. Not drunk. She seems awake. Awake like Merdan.

“Why are you staying?” he asks. “Because I’m not finished yet.” “With what?” “With you.”

Merdan feels something he rarely feels: Restlessness. Curiosity. Danger.

The Moment That Changes Everything

Shortly before six, as the sun draws its first golden lines through the windows, Liya stands up.

“I’m leaving now.”

Merdan nods. “Will you come back?”

She smiles. “That depends on you.”

She walks toward the door, stops, turns around.

“You’re a man who doesn’t stay. But maybe one day you’ll stay— with someone who doesn’t leave.”

Then she’s gone.

23

Merdan Remains

He stands behind the bar, hands resting on the counter, feeling something he doesn’t recognize.

Liya was different. Not loud. Not extravagant. Not one of the women of the nights.

She was a woman who stays— not physically, but in his mind.

And Merdan knows: That is more dangerous than any affair. More dangerous than any night. More dangerous than any truth.

Because for the first time in a long time, he wonders: **What if he doesn’t want her to leave?**

8 – The Escalation

The night begins like many others. Serdilland is full, the music pulsing, conversations flowing through the room like warm currents. Yet Merdan senses early on that something lingers in the air. A tension not coming from the guests, but from himself. Ever since Liya appeared in his life—or rather, in his night—something has shifted. He is more awake. More restless. More receptive.

He mixes drinks, smiles, listens. But again and again, his gaze drifts toward the door, as if he were expecting someone. Or fearing someone.

The Return

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Shortly after two, the door opens. And there she is. Liya.

Not in black like last time, but in a deep blue dress that makes her eyes appear even darker. She enters calmly, confidently, as if Serdilland were a place she has known for years. Merdan feels his heart skip a beat.

She sits in the same spot as before. “Water,” she says. Merdan nods. “Water.”

He sets it in front of her. She drinks. And she looks at him—not curious, not demanding, but knowing.

“You expected me.” “I don’t expect anyone.” “But you hoped.”

Merdan stays silent. She smiles. And in that moment, the escalation begins.

The Man Who Doesn't Accept No

A man Merdan has seen many times—tall, muscular, loud—approaches the bar. He is drunk, but not enough to be harmless. He sees Liya, sees Merdan, and something inside him tilts.

“Hey,” he says to Liya. “I saw you last week.”

She doesn't look at him. “I don't remember.”

“I do.” He places his hand on her shoulder.

Merdan reacts instantly. “Take your hand off.”

The man turns to him. “Why are you interfering?”

“She doesn't want it.”

“She can speak for herself.”

Liya looks at him. “I don't want it.”

He smirks. “You're one of those who say no first and then—”

Merdan steps forward. “Stop.”

The man studies him. “You think you're something special, huh? Just because you mix drinks and smile at women?”

Merdan stays calm. “Leave.”

The man laughs. “Or what?”

The Escalation

It happens fast.

The man grabs Merdan's shirt. Merdan moves aside—elegant, controlled. The man stumbles, hits a table, a glass falls and shatters. Guests turn. The music continues, but the atmosphere shifts.

“You want trouble,” the man says.

“No,” Merdan replies. “You want attention.”

The man swings. Merdan blocks the punch, twists the man’s arm, presses him against the counter. Not violently. Not angrily. Just precisely.

“Leave,” Merdan says quietly.

The man growls, tries to break free. Merdan holds him. “Leave.”

A friend pulls the man away. “Come on, man. Let it go.”

The man glares at Merdan. “This isn’t over.”

“Yes,” Merdan says. “It is. For tonight.”

They leave. The door closes. The bar exhales.

The Silence After

26

Merdan stands there, hands on the counter, shoulders tense. He feels the guests’ eyes on him. Some impressed. Some irritated. Some fascinated.

Liya looks at him. “You didn’t have to touch him.” “Yes, I did.” “Why?” “Because he didn’t respect you.” “And you?” “I respect you.” “But you didn’t respect yourself.”

Merdan looks at her. “What do you mean?”

“You put yourself in danger for someone you don’t know.”

He smiles. “I know you more than you think.”

“No,” she says. “You only know what you want to see.”

The Moment of Truth

She stands. “You’re a man who loves freedom. But freedom doesn’t mean you have to intervene everywhere.”

“I don’t intervene everywhere.”

“Yes. With me.”

Merdan stays silent.

She steps closer. “Why?”

“Because you stay.”

“And that scares you.”

He inhales deeply. “Yes.”

She places her hand on his. “Good. Fear means something matters.”

Then she lets go.

“But you need to decide whether you want me—or just the idea of me.”

She walks toward the door. “I’ll come back. But only if you know why you want me to.”

The door closes. Merdan remains.

The bar is loud again, alive, full of voices. But inside him, there is silence.

The Realization

For the first time in years, Merdan feels that he is not the one controlling the night—the night is controlling him.

And Liya? She is the first woman who doesn’t just stay. She is the first woman who challenges him.

The escalation wasn’t the fight. It was the truth.

And Merdan knows: The next night will be different.

9 – The Morning After

The morning after an intense night in Serdilland always carries a particular kind of silence. Not the silence of an empty room, but the silence of a place that has just lived through something. A room that still breathes. A room still warm from the stories that unfolded within it.

Merdan stands behind the bar, hands resting on the counter, feeling the fatigue in his bones—but not in his mind. His mind is awake. Too awake. Liya is gone, yet her words linger in the air like the scent of a perfume you don't know, but cannot forget.

“You have to decide whether you want me—or just the idea of me.”

He repeats the sentence in his thoughts, as if trying to untangle it. But it remains a knot.

28

The Bar at Dawn

The last guests have left. Chairs stand crooked, glasses half-empty, the music has faded. Only the light of the rising sun slips through the windows, painting golden stripes across the floor.

Merdan loves this moment. It feels like a breath taken after a long run.

He begins to clean up. Not mechanically—meditatively. He puts glasses back, wipes the counter, gathers bottles. Every movement brings him closer to himself.

Nights are for the people. Mornings are for him.

But today is different. Today his mind isn't free. Today he isn't just a bartender. Today he is a man feeling something he doesn't recognize.

The Studio Calls

Once the bar is clean, he locks the door and walks through the quiet streets of Berlin. The city wakes slowly. A baker opens his shop. A cyclist passes. A dog barks.

Merdan feels the tiredness in his legs, but his heart beats faster than usual.

At the studio, he switches on the light. The room greets him as always—warm, chaotic, honest. The portraits on the walls look at him as if they want to know what happened last night.

He takes off his jacket, sits at his table, and picks up his camera. He scrolls through the photos he took in recent days. But nothing holds him. Nothing speaks to him.

29

Until he finds a picture he took yesterday.

The New Portrait

It is a portrait of a man who always sits alone in Serdilland. A man with sad eyes that say more than his words ever could. Merdan photographed him without the man noticing. A quiet moment, captured in a quiet image.

He zooms in. The man's eyes look tired, but not broken. More like someone who has seen too much and still keeps going.

"You're like me," Merdan murmurs. A person who lives without knowing where he's heading.

He edits the picture. Deepens the shadows, brightens the highlights, sharpens the lines of the face. It's a good photo. An honest photo. A photo that stays.

But while he works, he thinks of Liya.

The Thoughts That Stay

Why did she affect him so deeply? Why did she challenge him? Why did she see him?

Merdan is a man who touches women without letting himself be touched. A man who offers closeness without allowing it. A man who loves freedom because commitment suffocates him.

But Liya was different. She wanted nothing from him. She wanted only truth.

And truth is more dangerous than love.

30

The Coffee That Doesn't Help

He makes himself a coffee, sits by the window, and looks outside. Berlin is bright now. People walk to work. Cars pass. A new day begins.

But Merdan feels as if he is still in the night.

He picks up his camera and takes a self-portrait. No pose. No lighting. No artistry. Just him—tired, thoughtful, honest.

When he looks at the picture, he startles. He doesn't look like the man who controls the nights. He looks like a man who has lost something. Or found something he doesn't understand.

The Decision That Grows

He leans back. He knows Liya will return. He knows she expects answers. He knows he has none.

But he also knows: He wants to see her again.

Not the idea of her. Not the challenge. Not the danger.

Her.

And that is the true morning after: Not the fatigue. Not the silence. Not the empty bar.

But the realization that something has begun— something he cannot control.

Merdan closes his eyes. For the first time in a long time, he doesn't feel free. But he feels alive.

31

10 – The Art Fair

The morning after Liya was heavy, but the day that followed brought an unexpected shift. Merdan had barely slept. He stayed in the studio, sorting photos, deleting some, revisiting others. But nothing eased the restlessness inside him. So he decided to do something he rarely did: He broke his routine.

The Invitation

Around noon, his phone rang—a rare event, since almost no one called him. It was a number he didn't recognize.

“Mr. Serhed? This is the curator of Galerie Lichtbogen. We've seen your portraits online. We'd like to invite you to our art fair.”

Merdan paused. “I don't exhibit.”

“Not yet,” the voice said. “But you should. Your images are... extraordinary.”

He stayed silent.

“Come by tonight. Just look. No obligation.”

He hung up. He looked at his photos. And for the first time in a long while, he wondered whether he could be more than the man who holds the nights together.

Galerie Lichtbogen

In the evening, he made his way there. The gallery was housed in an old factory building, its brick walls glowing warmly under the streetlights. Inside, it was bright, modern, filled with people drinking wine and speaking about art as if it were a language only they understood.

32

Merdan felt out of place. He was a man of the night, not of white walls. A man of stories, not critiques. A man of people, not the art scene.

But when he saw the first portraits, he stopped.

The Curator

A middle-aged woman approached him—elegant, gray-haired, sharp-eyed.

“You’re Merdan.”

“Yes.”

“Your images... they have something I rarely see.”

“What?”

“They show people as they are, not as they want to be.”

Merdan looked at her. “I don’t photograph for others.”

“Exactly why you should exhibit.”

She guided him through the gallery. Portraits, sculptures, abstract forms. But nothing touched him. Nothing—until one image suddenly held him.

The Image That Hits Him

It was a portrait of a woman. Not Liya. But someone with the same depth. The same gaze that doesn’t ask, but demands. The same expression that says: *I see you*.

Merdan stopped. “Who is she?”

“An artist,” the curator said. “She photographs herself. She shows herself without explaining herself.”

Merdan nodded slowly. “That’s rare.”

“Very.”

He felt something inside him. Something he had long ignored. Something not born from the night, but from himself.

The Offer

The curator turned to him.

“Merdan, I want you to exhibit at our next fair. Your portraits deserve to be seen.”

“I work in a bar.”

“And?”

“I’m not an artist.”

“Yes,” she said. “You are. You live art. You breathe it. You see it in people others overlook.”

Merdan stayed silent. He thought of Serdilland. Of the nights. Of the women. Of Liya. Of the freedom he defended so fiercely.

“I don’t know if I’m ready.”

“No one is ready,” she said. “You just begin.”

The Moment of Decision

He walked through the gallery, watching the people, the images, the conversations. He felt foreign. But not lost. More... curious.

For the first time in years, he wondered whether his life could be more than nights and portraits that only exist online.

He looked at the curator. “I’ll think about it.”

“Good,” she said. “That’s enough for today.”

34

The Way Back

On his way home through Berlin, the city felt different. Not like a place he controlled. But like a place offering him something.

He thought of Liya. Of her words. Of the truth she saw in him. Maybe it was time to change something. Not everything. But something.

The Realization

When he entered the studio, he looked at his portraits. A hundred faces. A hundred stories. A hundred truths.

And he knew: They deserve to be seen.

Not only by him. Not only by the night. But by the world.

Merdan sat down, picked up his camera, and began to work. Not for the bar. Not for the guests. Not for the nights.

For himself.

11 – The Decision

The day after the art fair felt different for Merdan. Not because of fatigue, not because of the night, not because of the bar. But because of the possibility that had suddenly opened before him—a possibility he had never sought, yet one that now followed him like a thought that refuses to fade.

He sat in the studio, the camera in front of him, the portraits on the walls like silent witnesses of his life. The curator's invitation lay on the table. A simple sheet of paper, yet heavy as a decision. 35

Two Worlds

Merdan lived between two worlds:

- The night, which carried him, nourished him, freed him.
- The art, which defined him, revealed him, made him vulnerable.

Until now, these worlds had existed side by side without touching. But the art fair had changed something. It had shown him that his images were not meant only for himself. That they could move people who didn't know him. That they had meaning—outside of Serdilland.

He stood, walked to the **Heartline**, the wall of his most important portraits. He looked at them for a long time.

“What do you want from me?” he whispered.

The images didn’t answer. But they looked at him as if they knew.

A Visit to Serdilland

In the evening, he went to the bar earlier than usual. Serdilland was still closed, the lights off, the room quiet. He sat at the counter and looked around.

Here was his life. Here was his freedom. Here was his stage.

He remembered the nights he had lived here. The people who came and went. The women who wanted him. The men who trusted him. The stories that unfolded in this room.

And he wondered: Was this enough?

36

The Curator Returns

Shortly before midnight, there was a knock at the door. Merdan opened it—and saw the curator from Galerie Lichtbogen.

“I didn’t want to disturb,” she said. “You’re not disturbing.” “I just wanted to know if you’ve thought about it.”

Merdan nodded. “Yes.” “And?” “I don’t know.”

She stepped inside, looked around. “This is a special place.” “It’s my place.” “But your art... it doesn’t belong only here.”

Merdan sat down. “I’m afraid.” “Of what?” “If I exhibit, I’m visible. And if I’m visible, I’m vulnerable.” “Art *is* vulnerability.” “I’m not an artist.” “Yes,” she said calmly. “You are. You live it. You just hide it.”

Merdan looked at her. “What if I lose myself?” “Then you’ll find yourself again. Maybe in a better place.”

The Moment of Truth

She placed a folder on the counter. “These are the documents. If you want to participate, sign. If not, burn them. Both are decisions.”

Merdan opened the folder. His images were inside—selected, arranged, described.

He looked at them, and for the first time he didn’t see them as memories. He saw them as art.

He closed the folder. “I need time.”

“You have time. But not forever.”

She left. The door closed. Merdan remained alone.

37

Liya Appears

Shortly after one, the door opened again. Liya entered.

Not loud. Not noticeable. Not asking.

She sat at the bar. “You look like you’re fighting.”

“I’m not fighting.”

“Yes. With yourself.”

Merdan looked at her. “I have a decision to make.”

“What kind?”

“Whether to exhibit.”

“And what’s holding you back?”

“I don’t know if I’m ready.”

“Being ready is an illusion.”

She drank her water. “Merdan, you’re a man who loves freedom. But freedom doesn’t mean standing still. Sometimes it means moving forward.”

He stayed silent. She looked at him—deep, clear, fearless.

“You’re afraid you’ll change. But you’ve already changed.”

Merdan felt something give way inside him. A resistance he hadn’t noticed. A wall he had never consciously built.

“If I exhibit,” he said quietly, “I might lose the night.”

“No,” Liya said. “You’ll only lose the darkness.”

The Decision

He stood, walked to the folder, opened it again. He looked at his images. He looked at his life. He looked at his truth. 38

Then he picked up the pen. He signed.

Liya smiled. “Good.”

“Why good?”

“Because you finally want something.”

Merdan inhaled deeply. For the first time in years, he didn’t feel just free. He felt brave.

The End of the Chapter

He closed the folder, set it aside, and looked at Liya.

“Will you stay tonight?”

“No,” she said. “Not tonight.”

“Why?”

“Because tonight you did something for yourself. Not for me.”

She left. Merdan remained.

And for the first time in a long time, he knew: He had made a decision that would change his life.

12 – The Night of Truth

The night begins like a faint shimmer. Berlin-Mitte is warm, the air heavy, the streets full of people who have no idea they might become part of a story. Serdilland opens at midnight as always, yet Merdan feels immediately that this night is different. Not because of the guests. Not because of the music. Because of him.

He has signed. He will exhibit. He has made a decision that makes him visible. And visibility is something he never sought. 39

The Restlessness

Merdan stands behind the bar, mixing drinks, smiling, listening—yet his hands tremble slightly. No one notices. No one except him. The decision he made sits heavy in his chest. He feels as if he has opened a door he cannot close again.

Around one o’clock, the musician enters—the regular with the leather jacket.

“You look different,” he says. “How different?” “Like someone who’s done something he can’t undo.”

Merdan gives a faint smile. “Maybe.”

The musician nods. “Good. People should do things they can’t undo. Otherwise they’re not living.”

Merdan mixes his drink, but his thoughts are elsewhere. With Liya. With the art fair. With the fear that follows him.

The Return of Silence

Around two, the bar grows fuller. Voices, laughter, music—everything as usual. Yet Merdan feels like a spectator in his own life. He sees the people, but he sees them differently. He sees them as potential portraits. As stories he could capture. As truths he could reveal.

He feels art growing inside him. Like a second heart. Like a second breath.

And in that exact moment, the door opens.

Liya Enters

40

She wears a simple white dress. No color, no extravagance. Just clarity.

She doesn't look around. She walks straight to the bar. Sits. "Water," she says.

Merdan sets it down. She drinks. She looks at him.

"You signed." "Yes." "Good." "I don't know if it's good." "Yes," she says. "It is."

He leans forward. "I'm afraid." "I know." "Of everything." "I know."

She doesn't say it to comfort him. She says it because it's true.

The Confrontation

"Why are you here?" Merdan asks.

“Because you need me.”

“I don’t need anyone.”

“Yes,” she says calmly. “You need someone who sees you before the world does.”

Merdan feels something tighten inside him.

“I don’t want to be seen.”

“Then you shouldn’t have signed.”

“I don’t know why I did.”

“Yes. You do. You want more.”

He stays silent. She looks at him—deep, clear, fearless.

“You don’t want only the night. You want the day.”

Merdan closes his eyes. “The day makes me vulnerable.”

“The night does too. You just never allowed it.”

41

The Breakdown

The truth hits him. Like a blow. Like light. Like loss.

He braces himself against the counter.

“I don’t know who I am if I’m not just a bartender.”

“Then find out.”

“What if I lose myself?”

“Then I’ll help you find yourself again.”

Merdan looks at her. “Why?”

“Because you need me.”

“I don’t need you.”

“Yes,” she says. “You need someone who stays.”

He breathes heavily. “I don’t know if I can stay.”

“You don’t have to stay. You just have to stop running.”

The Truth

The bar is loud, yet around them a silence forms—heavier than any music. Merdan feels his façade cracking. His freedom shifting. His fear revealing itself.

“I’ve never loved anyone,” he says quietly.

“I know.”

“I don’t know if I can.”

“I know.”

She places her hand on his. Not demanding. Not possessive. Just present.

“Merdan,” she says, “You don’t have to love anyone. You just have to stop losing yourself.”

He looks at her. And for the first time in years, he feels something he cannot name.

The Turning Point

Around four, Liya leaves the bar. Not abruptly. Not dramatically. She simply stands.

“I’m leaving now.”

“Will you come back?”

“Yes.”

“When?”

“When you’re ready.”

She walks out. The door closes. Merdan remains.

The Realization

He stands behind the bar, hands on the counter, and feels something stronger than fear. Stronger than freedom. Stronger than the night.

He feels change.

And he knows: The next night will not be the same. Because he is no longer the same.

13 – Farewell to the Bar

The evening begins like any other, yet Merdan feels it the moment he unlocks the door: this night will not be like the others.

Serdilland feels different. Not emptier, not fuller—just quieter. As if the room itself understands that something is about to happen.

He switches on the lights. The warm, dim glow spreads across the space, but it doesn’t feel like a beginning. It feels like an ending. An ending he never planned, but one that has been building inside him for weeks—like pressure he can no longer ignore.

The Decision That Follows Him

Ever since he signed the papers, ever since he decided to show his art, something inside him has shifted. The nights feel tighter. The bar, which always gave him freedom, suddenly

feels like a room that holds him back. Not out of malice—out of habit.

He loves Serdilland. But he knows he must change. And change demands sacrifice.

He walks behind the bar, touches the counter, the bottles, the glasses. Everything feels familiar. Too familiar.

“I need a break,” he whispers. Not to anyone. To himself.

The First Guests

Shortly after midnight, the regulars arrive. The musician with the leather jacket. The couple that always argues and then reconciles. Two women who smile at him as if he were a mystery they want to solve.

But Merdan is different tonight. He smiles, but it's a tired smile. He mixes drinks, but his hands move slower. He listens, but his thoughts drift elsewhere. 44

“You okay?” the musician asks.

Merdan nods. “I’m taking a break.”

“From what?”

“From everything.”

The musician studies him. “Good,” he says. “Sometimes you have to leave to come back.”

The Night Grows Heavy

By two o’clock, the bar is full, yet Merdan feels empty. The voices, the laughter, the music—all of it feels muted, as if he’s hearing through water.

He mixes drinks, but feels no joy. No art. No freedom.

He knows he must do something he has never done before: He must close the bar. Not forever. But for one night.

A night that belongs to him.

Liya Arrives

Shortly after three, the door opens. Liya enters.

She wears a dark dress—simple, elegant. Her gaze is calm, but when she sees Merdan, it changes.

“You’re not yourself,” she says.

“I know.”

“What happened?”

“I need to leave.”

“Where?”

“To myself.”

She sits at the bar. “Tell me.”

Merdan leans forward.

“I’ve spent my life in this bar. I’ve seen people, listened to them, photographed them, loved them, lost them. But I never saw myself.”

“And now?”

“Now I do. And I know I have to change something.”

Liya nods. “Then do it.”

The Moment of Farewell

Merdan taps the counter.

“Everyone,” he says.

The music softens. The guests turn toward him.

“I’m closing early tonight.”

A murmur spreads through the room.

“Why?” someone asks.

“Because I need a break.”

“For how long?”

“I don’t know.”

They look at him—some surprised, some disappointed, some understanding.

The musician nods. The couple smiles. The women whisper.

But no one protests.

Merdan walks to the door, flips the sign. Closed.

For the first time in years, Serdilland closes in the middle of the night.

46

The Silence After

The guests leave. The bar empties. The music fades.

Only Merdan and Liya remain.

He sits beside her.

“I’m afraid.”

“Good,” she says. “Fear means you’re alive.”

“What if I don’t come back?”

“Then you’ll find a new place.”

“And you?”

“I’ll stay as long as you’re honest.”

Merdan looks at her. “I want to be honest.”

“Then start now.”

He breathes deeply.

“I want more than the night.”

“Then step into the day.”

The New Morning

As the sun rises, Merdan is still sitting in Serdilland. The bar is quiet. The air warm. The future uncertain.

But for the first time in a long time, he doesn’t feel trapped. He feels free.

Not free from the bar. Not free from the night. Free from the fear that change means loss.

He stands, looks around, and says softly:

“I’ll come back. But differently.”

Liya smiles. “Good.”

47

14 – The Step into the Light

The morning after the closed night is unlike any other. Berlin-Mitte wakes as it always does—cars, voices, the rattle of the tram. Yet for Merdan, the city feels as if someone has remixed its colors. The air is clearer. The sounds softer. The future closer.

He stands in the studio, barefoot, a cup of coffee in hand. The portraits on the walls look at him like old friends who know he has changed. Not because he wanted to— but because it was time.

Preparation

The art fair is approaching. The curator has sent him a list: formats, frames, prints, titles. Merdan reads it, but it doesn't feel like work. It feels like a path. A path he has never walked, yet one that feels right.

He chooses twelve portraits. Twelve people who touched him. Twelve stories he captured.

The old man with whiskey eyes. The woman with the too-loud laugh. The boy who disappeared. The quiet woman from Chapter 3. And a self-portrait—the most honest of all.

48

He hangs the images in the studio as they will later hang in the gallery. He steps back, looks at them.

"That's me," he says softly. Not the bar. Not the nights. Not the women. Him.

The Visit

Around noon, there's a knock at the door. Liya.

She steps inside, looks around, stops.

"You've been working."

"Yes."

"You look different."

"I am different."

She walks to the images, studies them for a long time.

“This is brave.”

“It’s honest.”

“Honesty is bravery.”

Merdan smiles. “I’m afraid.”

“Good.”

“Why good?”

“Because you’re doing something bigger than yourself.”

She turns to him. “And you’ll succeed.”

The Last Evening in Serdilland

In the evening, Merdan goes to the bar. Not to work— but to say goodbye. 49

Serdilland is dark, quiet, like a room that knows it’s about to rest.

He walks through the space, touches the tables, the counter, the walls.

“Thank you,” he whispers.

For the nights. For the freedom. For the stories.

He sits on a barstool, head in his hands. He thinks of the nights he lived here. The people who shaped him. The women who wanted him. The men who trusted him. The art that was born here.

And he knows: He will return. But not as the same man.

The New Morning

The next day, he wakes early. He showers, gets dressed, takes the folder with his images, and walks to Galerie Lichtbogen.

The sun shines. The city is bright. And Merdan feels as if he is stepping into the day for the first time.

The curator greets him.

“Ready?”

“No.”

“Perfect.”

She leads him into the exhibition room. White walls. High ceilings. Silence.

Merdan hangs his images. One by one. Each in its place. Each a part of him.

50

When he's done, he steps back. He sees the twelve portraits. He sees his life. He sees his truth.

And he smiles.

Liya Appears

She arrives later, quietly, as always. She looks at the images, looks at him, looks at the change.

“You've arrived,” she says.

“Where?”

“In yourself.”

Merdan breathes deeply. “Will you stay?”

“I'll stay as long as you go.”

“Go where?”

“Forward.”

The New Merdan

He leaves the gallery, steps into the sunlight. He feels light. Not because he left something behind— but because he found something.

He is a bartender. He is a photographer. He is an artist of life. He is Merdan.

And for the first time in years, he owns not only the night. He owns the morning too.

Epilogue – Serdilland

The day of the exhibition is warm, clear, and still. Berlin lies beneath a sky that looks as if someone forgot all the clouds. Merdan stands in front of Galerie Lichtbogen, hands in his pockets, shoulders relaxed, gaze calm. He is not nervous. Not anymore. He is ready.

Inside, his photographs hang on white walls—large, honest, unfiltered. People stop in front of them, speak softly, some smile, some frown, some remain silent. His portraits do exactly what he always wanted them to do: They touch without explaining.

The curator steps beside him. “You did it.” Merdan nods. “I started.”

He walks through the room, watching the people who study his work. For the first time, he doesn’t feel like an observer— but like part of something larger. Something that isn’t made only of nights.

Then he sees her.

Liya.

She stands in front of his self-portrait. The honest one. The vulnerable one. The one he almost didn't hang.

She turns to him, her gaze soft yet clear.

"That's you," she says. "Yes." "Finally."

She steps closer. "You didn't lose yourself." "No." "You found yourself." "Maybe."

She smiles. "You're not just a man of the night anymore."

"Yes," Merdan says. "But now I'm also a man of the morning."

She takes his hand. Not tightly. Not demanding. Just enough for him to feel she's there.

"What comes next?" she asks.

Merdan looks around. "Everything."

He thinks of Serdilland. Of the nights. Of the people. Of the stories. Of the freedom.

He knows he will return. But not as the man he was. As the man he has become.

A bartender. A photographer. An artist of life. A human who no longer runs.

As the sun slowly sets and the gallery empties, Merdan stands outside, hands in his pockets, gaze forward.

The night is waiting. The morning too. And for the first time, both belong to him.

Serdilland continues to live. But now, Merdan lives beyond it as well.

The End.

Explanation of the Title “Serdilland”

Serdilland is not a geographical place, but an inner space. A place above the heart—where nights, memories, and people turn into stories. The name is invented.

In Kurdish, *Serdilland* literally means “**place above the heart**”:

- *Ser* = above
- *Dil* = heart
- *Land* (borrowed from German) intentionally stands for place / space.

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It describes a quiet, personal realm that lies above everyday life— a space where feelings, encounters, and moments grow into something larger.