

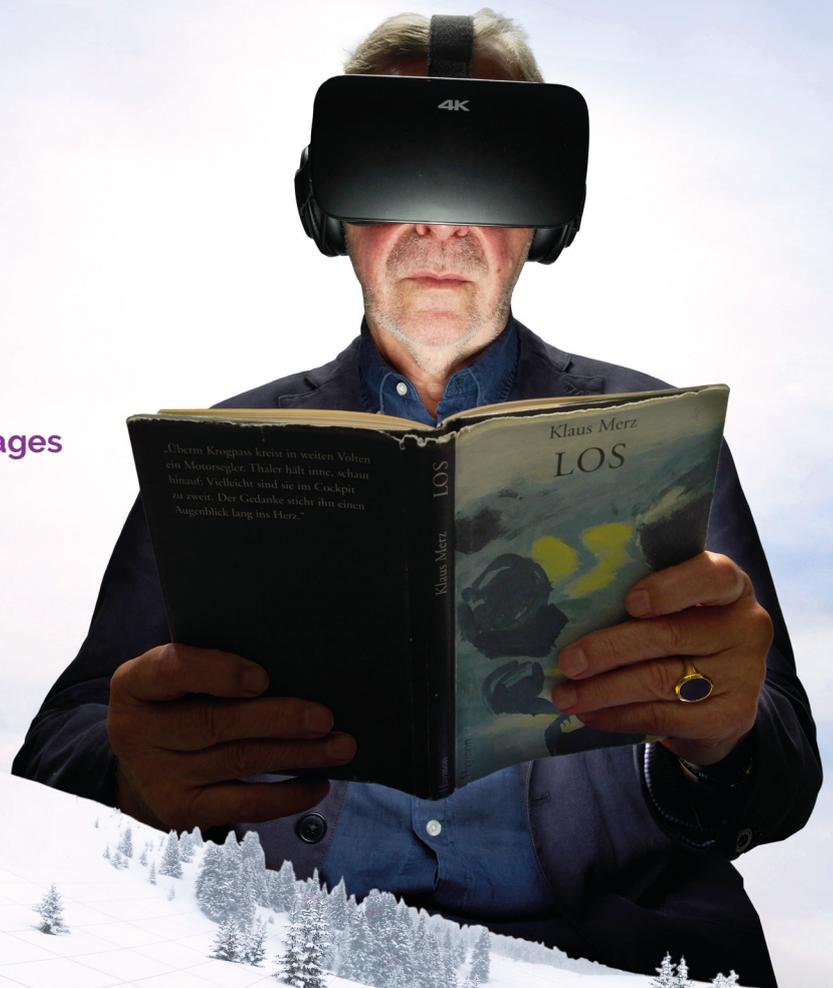
A moving VIRTUAL REALITY experience  
inspired by true events

# GO

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## Text

of the reading  
1'800 words  
unchanged from the story LOS,  
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«Storytelling does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again.

Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel.»

*Walter Benjamin, «The Storyteller»*

**W**e had searched for you, called your name, dug. But the rescue crews all returned to the valley empty-handed. The helicopters landed without results, their tanks were refilled and they offered themselves for other duties. Nor was there any response when your picture appeared on TV. Without exception, the psychics all led us astray. There was nothing left to do but follow our assumptions. The possibility that you might have gone to ground in the Caribbean was never an option, not for you, not for us. On your bank accounts, there was no movement.

«My dear Thaler lost his way.» We clung firmly to your wife's sentence, as did your grown up, silent children, and after all the fruitless searches, we gradually began to resume our daily lives, returning to all our familiar routines without your presence.

You only returned to us in our dreams. As if nothing had happened, you entered into our living rooms and bedrooms, you sat at our tables, you lay down in your bed. Until we secretly begged you to stay where you are now.

Under the autumnal blanket of high fog, the houses in the neighbourhood huddle together like a pack. But not a wolf pack, rather a flock of sheep of the timid kind. Among them, the flat roofs of the apartment blocks are the boldest.

Other than that, only downheartedness under small pointed gables.

Following Fanny and Herta, two other storm fronts whose names have already been forgotten, rumbled over the land. And on the radio, a young man barks his self-penned morning poem into the microphone, as if he were a Newfoundland dog. Thaler turns it off and reaches for his rucksack. The tattered copy of «A Small World History of Philosophy» is left behind on the table.

Before breakfast, his children had lifted him up in the air as if he were made of paper. Sometimes he wished they would grow up inside his own ribcage – and make it expand.

As Thaler steps outside, passing through the door, he pulls himself together. The children in the area have long been consigned to day care and school. Or they're already serving apprenticeships in order to become like us.

**H**oarfrost coats the land, the light licks at its brocade edges. This autumn, the trees dropped all their leaves at once. Like a silver band, the main road runs along the train tracks towards the horizon.

Back home, after hesitating briefly, his wife had let him go without a word, Maybe it'll help, he saw Lena thinking. The truth is, he is nothing but a burden. It's good that he just left without further ado. The children will have more fun without him, his wife has an easier time of it and has more courage when he's not there.

**H**is train is gathering speed. Nowhere does he feel as protected as in a train. Surrounded only by chance companions. He finds them to be the most reliable and he feels closest to them.

*(chat in VR-film)*

*Hey*

*Hey*

*Do I stink of cheese?*

*Kiss me!*

This wish, no, this command is associated in Thaler's mind with the red lips of a former fellow student who had always dragged him along, out on the streets, the squares, the boulevards. But during the demonstrations Thaler regularly trailed behind on the pavement, and he fell further and further behind, insecure, despondent. Back in his attic room, he opened his window each time, climbed up on a chair and looked out over the city's gables. Towards the sea.

On each school trip he would be immediately overcome with a feeling of homesickness for more gentle hues and for the green hills of the Swiss plateau. The indestructible, the invincible, the precipitously looming, the sheer insurmountability of the rock faces – along with Heidi and Peter and his flock of goats – he could hardly bear it.

All the while, on clear days, the crown of the Alps loomed; it had sat enthroned, trumpeting down his neck, into his ears since his earliest childhood: ‘Through morning dew, up to the mountains we go, fallera...’ Barefoot. Over hill and dale. And when the Alps grew bright with splendor, the free Swiss prayed to God, to Him surrender; ... starting in fifth grade, they’d had to sing the Swiss anthem by heart as soon as they set foot in the Alpine foothills, and it gave Thaler a fever every time.

Years later, Thaler travelled to the sea, out into the flatlands. With sand between the pine and fir trees. And sand between his teeth. He landed on the edge of deserts, he swam in the open sea, stared into jaggedness. Irritated, fascinated and more indulgently inclined towards the Alpine peaks of his homeland with each flap of the fin, the mountains only become accessible to him by experiencing the counter-mountainscape of the deep sea: Hard, soft and mutable, the rocks are washed up on the beach.

So even rock is destructible, finite, drifting sand like himself.

The depth of the snow is increasing steadily. Thaler's eyes are burning, but he does not think of turning back. He proceeds with a fierce expression, relishing the workings of his body, his sure footing.

Up on the pass, the storm is even stronger, a white sail rises, billows over the crest, directly towards him. Thaler leans into the gust of wind, but it tears his peaked cap from his head, he snatches at it, loses his foothold, slips, falls. He slides feet first down a steep slope, tries to slow down by flailing his arms and legs, his legs and forehead are beaten raw against the rock face, he breaks his foot.

He heard the bone break. He comes to rest lying on his back in a gentle hollow, in the snow, dazed with pain — and with a peculiar sense of satisfaction in his mind: Something like this had always been foreseen for him, he has to believe.

His life to date has been nothing but deferral, delay, skirmishes.

Now it's serious.

Finally.

The snow gradually covers Thaler in a soft, white blanket, cools his forehead and eyelids; in Thaler's imagination it alleviates the freezing sensation on the rest of his body, and also brightens the blind spot inside, the speechless lips, the dark silhouettes of his children left behind, who are now threatened to relive the same fate that had ultimately driven him again and again up into this thin air. Searching for ground beneath his feet, a stockpile of rock for the winter, anchoring himself in landscapes and pictures, in the light.

Again, Thaler gathers all his strength, shouts: 'Rise up and walk!' —

Jesus never made any real jokes, at least none that were handed down, the thought suddenly strikes Thaler. This extraordinary human being would have certainly had some sense of humour. And why weren't we told those anecdotes about him?

Thaler groans: The true love of mankind and credibility of all divinities and founders of religions should not be measured against their wounds, miracles, and commandments, but also against their sense of humour, for God's sake!

'Rise up and walk!' However, he must have broken a few ribs as well if simply drawing the breath for this short invocation caused him such terrible pain.

He wouldn't be missed at home until evening, the children will ask where he is and remain sitting at the table, in silence. Or they will hole themselves up in their rooms and shove a metal CD into the slot, and shoot at stick figures on the screen.

Lena will put a candle on the living room table and will place the flat of her hands over her nose and mouth like a gable and will breathe warm air into her palms that have turned cold.

Around two o'clock in the morning, after the children have finally gone quiet, sleep will overpower Lena, or maybe fear for Thaler will get the upper hand.- Good Lord, Thaler moans through clenched teeth,  
good Lord, Lena!  
He can't think of anything more.

**H**e looks stoically up through his observation slit at the rapidly darkening sky. The night will be a clear one, this he knows. — Venus appears. Should he speak to the star, and how many wishes does he have left, what would he command a shooting star, if one passed over him?

He thinks of his children. And of the old Swiss Confederacy, of all things, the Battle of Sempach, the man who steps out from the backdrop and says: Take care of my wife and children!

But Thaler doesn't want to breach the enemy lines for anyone anymore, he doesn't want to win a war, just win peace, his peace, if possible.

No coat of arms, no banner, no real weather. The encounter takes place in a sand-colored inhospitable area. It occurs between a fair, gentle knight, no, a lady riding a small grey horse—the saddle is scarlet, as are her shoes—and a black knight on the back of a burly black stallion. The knight wears a helmet and armour. Behind him rides his army, more sensed than seen. The gravitational pull of the blackness surges stoically from the depths of space.

The setting is a far cry from Henri de Toulouse Lautrec's *Moulin Rouge*. It lies in a Norman's, in an everyman's land. 'Deux chevaliers en armure,' is the painting's makeshift title, probably attributed to it later. The translation of the title is 'Medieval Battle Scene', but there is not just war in the air, even if the painting shows the hooves under which we will fall, under which Thaler will fall in the coming night.

Because there is also this woman rider, bright and effortless, as a kind of counter-dance, so to speak. And her eye does not hold the battle, the horror, but the Grail. Or do the two actually carry each other, knight and rider, in their hearts, souls and minds wherever they go?  
Like man and wife?  
Like life and death?

**T**haler wants to raise up his arms one more time, to make two angel wings in the powdery snow, as a sign. But his muscles no longer obey him. His entire body is numb and stiff with cold.

No, he feels no fear of death, rather an almost indecent sense of relief that he neither needs to advance nor retreat,  
dead tired,  
as he is now.