

2. THE WORLD

Rubia Maat's world is a world of prejudice, and though she is not old, it is often just such a world of old people that she represents. The name Rubia is taken from the plant *Rubia tinctorum*/madder, a plant once used for dye, while Maat, in ancient Egyptian mythology, is the goddess of truth, law, morality, and justice. Rubia's name thus symbolically means a coloured truth.

Rubia Maat, the warden of the federal prison, is a careful and meticulous woman. She leaves nothing to chance, and her house—the prison—is, at first glance, very orderly. Nothing that could afflict, wound, or harm her can enter it. The warden does not recognize Eros's purity, but her Racio and Emocio deceive her Instinkt and open the door for Eros into her inviolable world. Here the reader once again encounters the power of our minds, which easily alter the truth without even slightly doubting their own distorted perception.

Although Rubia's most important mind—Instinkt—protects her world to perfection, this very fact makes it vulnerable, because of her subordinate minds, Emocio and Racio, which long for companionship and love. The prison has four sections, for four groups of characters. In the first section are the worst criminals, these being men who are ruled by Emocio. The prisoners are connected, via specially coded numbers, to real people from Rubia Maat's life.

Only one has managed to escape the prison, prisoner number 452210. He represents Rubia's first, unhappy love—the boy who left her. It was then that she decided no one would ever hurt her again, so she began to look for flaws in all men, so as not to have to let them into her world. Thus, in her world, every man is condemned even before he can introduce himself to her. But it is not only men who ask her on dates who find themselves in her prison, but also her friends' men. And a very special section is dedicated to women who mess with the heads of all the foolish representatives of the male sex.

Prisoner number 746071 supposedly raped his wife. But what Rubia actually sees here is a married couple in which there is no longer any real love, only numbness and an empty relationship. To make the connection between the people in the prison and Rubia's prejudices more obvious, Eros at this point recalls his dream, in which a giant mahogany gavel, which the warden uses for her judgments, tries to destroy him. Prisoner 827909 is, in Rubia Maat's eyes, a pedophile, but it turns out that this respectable older man simply has a much younger girlfriend.

The warden carefully guards her intimate world, which is a characteristic of all those ruled by Instinkt. Eros, who asks her about children and personal happiness, therefore seems impudent to her. Because he is not satisfied with her answer, he

deliberately triggers the alarm to see what will happen. Rubia's defense mechanism, however, greatly surprises him—for it is humor. Laughter proves to be the way to her heart.

Prisoner 699195 is a man who lets his doting wife spoil him, but for Rubia this represents contempt for one's partner. She does not accept that such a relationship might also suit someone, and so she is convinced that the man has killed the woman in his wife. Prisoner 848248, who cheats on his wife, causing his two daughters to suffer as well, is also among the worst criminals to the warden. What bothers her most about him is that he tries to conceal his actions from his family with flowers and gifts. Prisoner 896236 is condemned for jealousy, which, however, turns out to be justified, as his wife is unfaithful to him. But Rubia condemns all jealous men, because to her they are merely excessively domineering men.

Rubia Maat tells Eros of numerous men who have in common the fact that they do not accept themselves. The young men with prisoner numbers 807559 and 705424 represent, in her world, people who hide their own worlds behind a façade of success. Prisoner 816839 uses these façades not only to deceive others, but even himself, for with them he has transformed a part of his world—one that is unacceptable in a society shaped by Racio's values—into its opposite. This prisoner therefore despises and scorns the very people whose worlds are similar to his own, and in order to conceal his own world even more, he publicly mocks such worlds.

The lunch awaiting Eros on the table consists of three meager tins, which hint that Rubia's world is somehow connected to Athina's. A lunch in tins, after all, in no way belongs in the world of otherwise careful and diligent Instinkts, such as Rubia Maat. The number of tins, however, reveals that someone in the warden's world has recognized Eros's character, for one has been set out for each of his minds.

As Eros heads toward the control room in the prison, he catches Rubia talking with someone—the only other being besides them to appear in her world. This is the warden's most important mind—her shy Instinkt. It hides as soon as Eros approaches. The control room in the middle of the prison illustrates Instinkt's caution and constant vigilance. This, of course, it does as unobtrusively as possible, safely from behind its walls. Instinkts are curious, but they have difficulty opening their houses and worlds, their oh-so-sacred intimacy. Instinkts that do not accept themselves, moreover, can even be very malicious. Their security system is configured to destroy anyone who might pose a potential threat to their world. Such people therefore often taunt and slander, interpreting the words of others as criticism, which they cannot bear.

Drinking alcohol greatly weakens the functioning of Instinkt and Racio, but Emocio handles it much better. People under the influence of alcohol therefore often seemingly change their character—for it is then that you meet the face of their Emocio. An old proverb says, **in vino veritas**, but the real truth is that it is Emocio that speaks then, the mind that will readily reveal to you the secrets of a world that Instinkt and Racio otherwise carefully hide from you (the former more than the latter). For a few moments, alcohol opens Rubia Maat's strictly guarded world—with Emocio, the sun shines into it through the ceiling.

In the second section are found a liar—686327, an exploiter—036234, a thrifty man—708127, a miser—790747, and 085841—an eccentric who likes to dress in women's clothes. What they all have in common is that their actions harm others only indirectly.

In the third section are the prisoners with the mildest sentences. These are people who harm no one, but whom Rubia Maat mocks. 894344 strives to prove himself in sexual intercourse, but is unsuccessful in this endeavor because he is a poor connoisseur of the [psi] and the female body. 957538 is dependent, attached to his mother—he is a prisoner with an Instinkt. The way Rubia describes him, however, also reveals the witty, humorous side of her mind, which is a characteristic of a creative Instinkt. 763509—a computer guy—is a Racio, 349090—a monologist—an Emocio... Here it becomes clear that no mind is suitable for Rubia's world. Even 077407—the self-infatuated man, who is none other than Olivier from the first world—represents, in Rubia Maat's prison, merely a narcissist with whom she has nothing to do.

That no one can escape judgment in this world of prejudice becomes clear when we see that even a clumsy man—147895, Rubia's favorite television host—198533, and men with various physical defects find themselves in the prison. Eros realizes that entirely ordinary people are locked up in this prison. This realization is the final piece in the mosaic of Rubia's world. Now Eros can deduce for himself that the fourth section, the women's section, holds all those women whom the warden despises.

All these prisoners, however, are merely a figment of Rubia's imagination. For her world is not a reflection of the truth about others' worlds; rather, Rubia Maat, who cannot see these worlds, creates for herself entirely distorted ideas and judgments about them, and it is precisely because of these, without realizing it, that she closes herself off from people in her so very protected world. Rubia's world turns out to be her own prison. There is no one else in it, only Rubia Maat herself. This is the price paid by all who are not prepared to risk even a little for love.