

Helga Anders: Love, tell me where you are

New series in BILD

When I was 13, I started flirting – mostly with older men. For example, with Albert Hehn, father of Sascha Hehn who played in the "Traumschiff" (The Dream Ship) series.

Albert Hehn was at least in his mid-40s at the time – and I had such a crush on him. We went on tour with "Hanneles Himmelfahrt" (The Assumption of Hannele) by Gerhart Hauptmann. The premiere was in Bolzano, where I had 40 degrees fever, but still played and got great reviews as "Hannele".

Practised kissing with a friend

But Albert Hehn shaking my hand on stage was much more important to me. I got so excited. Or when he stroked my hair tenderly behind the stage.

Nothing else happened – not even a kiss. I had already practised French kissing with a childhood friend, but my first real love kiss was still to come.

I was still a child and wore the nightgown from "Max der Taschendieb" (Max the Pickpocket) at home. I didn't even know the facts of life.

The union of man and woman: I couldn't imagine that at all. How does it work? What's so nice about it? I imagined the most incredible things.

The girls, who are the same age today as I was then, may be in stitches when I tell them the following: My mother always warned me not to stand in front of a man without a bra or even panties.

My mother – who married four times – said: "Men are only one-track-minded!"

Even though I was so childlike, I had a strong erotic charm. The men at the theatre turned to look at me.

I don't know if Albert Hehn also felt a certain forbidden attractiveness at the sight of his younger partner.

If so, he concealed it behind a fatherly and kind manner. And I was blissful when I was allowed to eat with him in a hotel room one evening in Bressanone:

Cheese, white bread, ham with wine from southern Italy, the famous Vesuvius wine "Lacrima Christi" – which was called "Unterrockstürmer" in Germany at the time.

But my mother was there. Nothing happened.

In this time, my mother granted me a wish – as a reward for my confirmation. My wish was to meet my real father.

Then, when he stood in front of me, in Innsbruck, tall, handsome, blonde, athletic, I had a tremendous desire to touch him, to take him in my arms.

I didn't give him a hug. He didn't touch me. Everything was so weirdly cold. I felt a great sadness coming over me. I had nothing to do with this tanned Austrian, who used to be a ski instructor and now runs a sports shop.

Fatherlessness was one of the reasons that later led to many shambles in my private life, to my unfortunate addiction to alcohol and pills.

I played "Week-End" with Grethe Weiser in the "Kleine Komödie" (Small Comedy) in Munich. She was a stunning comedian with a wonderful Berlin dialect, many small dogs and countless gold chains. Grethe Weiser had taken a liking to me. She told everyone how talented I was. She supported me, fooled around with me during rehearsals.

The theatre is my real home, I know that. I only went to rack and ruin, had the wrong men and the wrong friends, because I lost this home again and again. Acting, as I did later, is prostitution of the soul. At some point, you go to pieces.

In the "Week-End" troupe, there was also this magic boy with blue eyes, a soft mouth, and funny curls: Michael Ande. You know him as Siegfried Lowitz' assistant in the "The Old Fox" (Der Alte) series.

Michael Ande, then 19, was the first great love of my life. He took me home after the theatre. One evening he took me in his arms, with real strength as is right and proper, and kissed me. I went to the front door as if in a trance, turned around again, flung open the door, ran into my room, slammed the door shut, threw myself on the bed – and just shivered.

Everyone went their own way

The next day, I dared not look at Michael Ande.

I was very much in love with him. When we saw each other again later as adults when filming, we had to laugh a lot about ourselves. Romeo and Juliet from Hirtenweg in Munich-Grünwald.

At some point, the great success of "Week-End" with 150 performances came to an end. At some point we had to part ways. Everyone went their own way.

Sascha Hehn's father was my first love.

Albert Hehn, 33 years older than Helga Anders. He was the first man she fell madly in love with. He didn't know anything about it.

Michael Ande, once a child star like Helga Anders, became her first great love. He was 19, she was 16.

Helga at the age of 16 ... and 30

Two photos that tell her whole story. Above: Helga Anders at the age of 16 – a pretty, successful girl who knows nothing about the dark side of life yet. Left: Helga Anders at the age of 30 in the closed rehab facility Fürth im Wald, physically and mentally exhausted. She lived here for six months. It was her sixth alcohol withdrawal treatment.

Tomorrow you can read:

The double life of Helga Anders: she gets engaged to a man eleven years older than her, who showers her with roses and gifts. But when she's alone, she's the little girl who prefers playing with a plastic duck.

Recorded by ROBERT MENKE