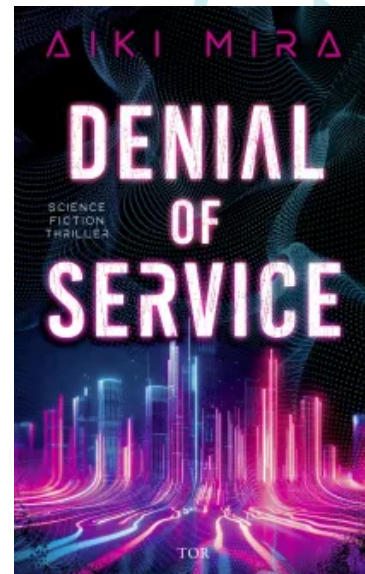


Aiki Mira

Denial of Service

A Science Fiction Thriller

256 pages



Fully automated, super smart... and deadly

- Exciting and visionary: a thriller about the future of our cities
- Aiki Mira is a multiple winner of the German Science Fiction Award and the Kurd Laßwitz Prize
- US rights of Aiki Mira's [Proxi](#) sold to Rosarium Publishing
- Topics: Tech Thriller, AI, Cyberpunk

In the city of Frankfurt am Main, Germany's first crypto-billionaire has privatized the military, police, transportation and city administration. An artificial neural network supports all institutions and is also part of the brain-city interface: implanted chips that allow intuitive interaction with the city (its buildings, machines, streets, transportation system). The ANN develops its own code of ethics, which it never deviates from, and ensures the smooth functioning of the infrastructure. When a homeless teenager dies, a group of coders and a bot set out to find the cause of the accident. They uncover something monstrous, but before they can tell anyone about it, the military intervenes.

"one of the most interesting voices in German-language science fiction today" — Dietmar Dath, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

"It is particularly striking for its detailed worldbuilding. Mira writes of the city of the future in impressive, at times almost lyrical prose." — Florian Schmid, der Freitag

"The otherwise dystopian digital future offers plenty of utopian possibilities in Aiki Mira's empowering novel." — Florian Schmid, der Freitag

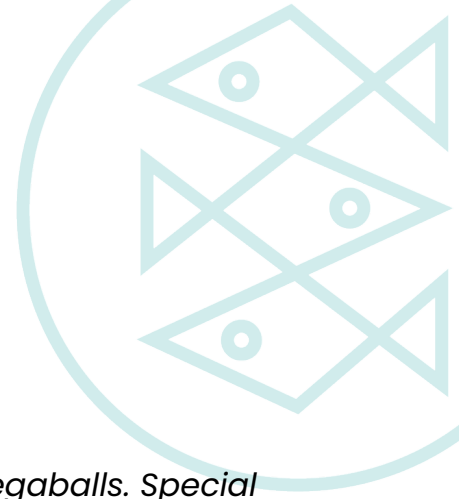
"world-building par excellence. The vividly written, multi-layered, and diverse characters immediately leave you wanting more. A must-read!" — Eevie Demirtel, Geek!

"This book races toward the future from the opposite direction so forcefully that the future might just learn a newfound respect for us humans from it." — faz.net

Aiki Mira writes essays, short stories, and novels. Their short stories have received multiple German Science Fiction Awards as well as the Kurd Laßwitz Prize, and have been translated into English, French, and Chinese. With the novels *Neon Gray*, *Neurobeast*, and [Proxi](#), Aiki won the Kurd Laßwitz Prize for Best German Science Fiction Novel three consecutive times. *Neon Gray* was adapted into a radio play, and *Proxi* topped the Phantastik Bestenliste for months. The European Science Fiction Society honored Aiki with the Chrysalis Award.

Sample Translation: Conni Covington

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End

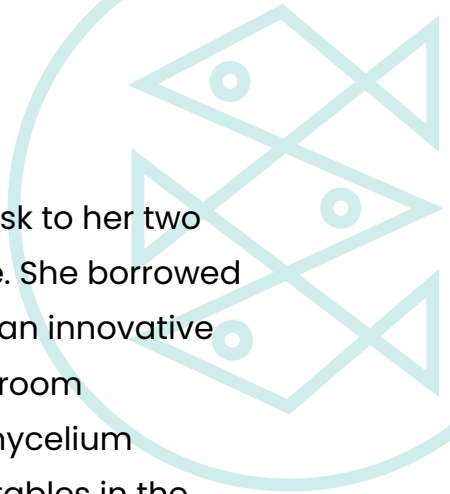
The kid collapses. Just like that. Headfirst into the megaballs. Special sauce spurts. Hot. It must be hot. Per just made it. Nobody stirs. No sound in the snack bar. From outside, the city creeps in. Something hums. A drone in front of the window.

Only a few hours earlier, Per zipped on her Pedelec in the direction of the tech park. The world is still all right then. No traffic jams on the S-way, pleasant twenty-three degrees. Morning rain cuts into her face. The air, dark and heavy from all the water, barely breathable, tastes like a river. That's Frankfurt am Main.

A creature of steel, glass, stone, and modular architecture. Fully automated, AI-autonomous, and super smart. Second crypto capital of the planet, aspiring finance superpower of the world. To Per, who was born here, a monster that never stops growing or being hungry, both terrible and terribly beautiful. An open-air research station in a skyscraper exoskeleton that produces waste, processes information, adapts, and evolves.

The city devours metals, ores, minerals, and biomass. At night it and other cities create the largest galaxy of lights on the globe. It governs water circulation, temperature, wind, and clouds. Its emissions change the atmosphere and weather.

The city decides on the life of every species in, on, and under it. Autonomous humanoid bots are among them. Defective leftovers from another time. Like abandoned pets, they wander through the streets and go wild, becoming chaos AIs. To the city, they and Per and all the others are mere grains of dust. Precarious, tiny; here today, gone tomorrow. Long, dense commuter routes. Constant noise. Excessive artificial light and only a few public oases, like the Ada Lovelace Fountain or the newly constructed Zhou Qunfei Park. Billionaires who plan and privatize entire cities don't think about others' lives.



When Per's mother transferred the synthlab snack kiosk to her two years ago, Per did everything not to lose that piece of home. She borrowed money from the Deng Bank and transformed the store into an innovative takeaway for handmade food made from fermented mushroom mycelium: vegan! healthy! natural! Per got the necessary mycelium reactor on credit. Getting the official permit to set up three tables in the kiosk and two out front took almost as long as convincing her mother about the mushroom idea – eight months. Fatma is still skeptical today, has blocked one of the tables since the reopening. She sits there and waits for a disaster. No, thinks Per, my mother wishes for it.

Per should have thought that at some point, something truly awful would happen. But on this morning she suspects nothing, hums to herself as she locks up her Pedelec.

With the new queer-orientalist beat from Banyo Kepi in her ear, she strolls to the entrance. Per is fully 1.75 meters tall and is muscled like a predator, thus she always has this hard, hopping gait that shows who she is. If people on the street threaten her, she drops into this motion, ducks and dances and leaps down the street. Yeah, she's German and German-Turkish and German-Iranian. But first and foremost she's a Frankfurter, wears the city bliss like smog in her eyes. Her biceps like balloons on her arms. The newest tech as steady illumination in her clothes. Per is happy to live in this very city, at this very time, to bounce over the soft fall-protective asphalt, to step through the noise-damping rain, to unlock the tiny kiosk, to set the wobbly front screen to blinking: Vegan! Healthy! Natural!

She drags two tables outside, starts up the bioreactor that isn't paid off yet, heats up the special sauce, and presses mushroom fibers into megaballs. She slides the first plate across the sticky counter.

She hesitates less than a second – the face is pale as a pinch of salt. She wonders briefly if the kid is going to pay. Kids don't always do that, and Per lets them get away with it too often, Fatma thinks. Per believes in neighborly help. After all, the kids live just around the corner on the plaza in

front of the Deng Tower, and the people who live there need all the help they can get.

Like most megacities, Frankfurt is composed of many additional invisible cities. Here in the cleantech center, where sheiks and technocrats commute in solar-powered elevators between their office and penthouse, the parks surrounding them host mobile homeless villages, several populations of pigeons, and an unknown number of chaos bots in all shapes and sizes who roam the city like lost souls. Beside the vast expanse of the public spaces with their various lifestyles exists the vertical of the super-high towers. The differences between the dimensions are so large that many don't even perceive each other anymore. The people staring into their smartphones turn their backs to the homeless kids, even when they're standing directly across from them.

Because Per doesn't immediately ask the kid to pay, Fatma audibly exhales. Pfff. It's my takeaway, Per thinks. No one can know if a kid will pay. Per doesn't doubt for an instant that this kid – like all the others before – will leave the snack bar alive.

Welp, thought wrong.

Headfirst. Sauce everywhere. Caramelized, mushroom-based, and as dark as dried blood. Everyone looks at Per: Fatma, the second kid, and the person who is currently walking in. Per wants to jump up, set everything in motion.

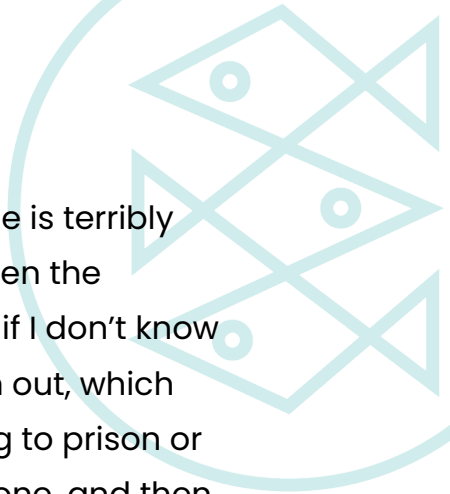
But her body refuses.

Total. Shock. End.

Nosedive

Tad knows it. No, he senses it even before he knows it. Like a prickling on his scalp. The drone plummets, and he can't do anything about it. There's nothing. No signal that zips back and forth between them that could be intercepted or jammed. It flies autonomously and it plummets autonomously.

With his drone he scribbled the kids' tags everywhere, a thousand times, on the heat-resistant tiles of the skyscrapers. *Frankfurt belongs to*



us! While it sprays paint, Tad keeps watch. And every time he is terribly afraid, then he persuades himself that he'll just go away when the predictive algorithm sends a patrol by. I'll just go further, as if I don't know the kids and the drone. If the kids knew that, they'd cast him out, which would be worse than getting caught, worse even than going to prison or losing the drone. Because without the kids, Tad would be alone, and then he would truly have no one left.

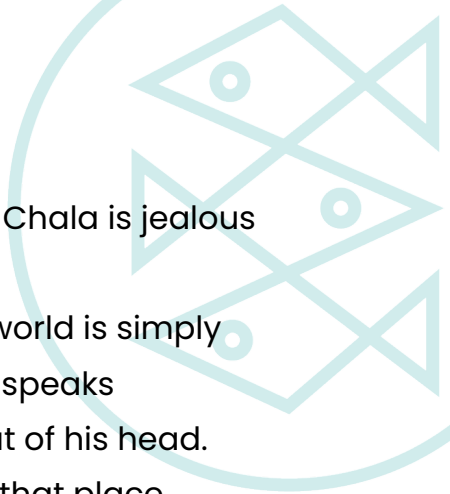
The tower of the Deng Bank looks down on everything like a god. When the kids are high, they ride the whole way up and sneak onto the observation decks. In wind and rain, nobody is up there, and then the kids are like God and look down on everything. Chala and Zuzie are convinced that they won't live past eighteen. They're both already sixteen, Tad just thirteen, a baby. When they do something illegal, Tad is always afraid someone will catch them. They think it's cute and make light of it. Hardly anyone notices Tad's drone that, armed with spray paint, spreads the names of the kids far across the city. An inconspicuous quadcopter, a repurposed delivery drone that flies without a signal, can be neither located nor jammed. Tad equipped it with an arm and an airbrush on a tilt-and-swivel mechanism. He generates appropriate program commands through an external module or creates little apps for graffiti on 3D structures. Most of it Tad learned from AIs on the internet.

The drone's arm is composed of carbon fiber tubes he found. He had the aluminum mounts 3D printed for a little crypto. In some circles, drones are infamous; in others, famous.

"What are you looking at?" Chala always asks when Zuzie is looking at something with the clear eye. Most of the time, two locks of hair hide the soft bulge that blossoms in Zuzie's eye socket like something that dey are intentionally letting grow there. A dollop of extraterrestrial goo. White skin cancer.

"I'm not looking," Zuzie answers.

"You are too. You see everything," retorts Chala, who believes the dead eye has magical powers. To Tad's ears, it always sounds a bit



envious. As if Zuzie possessed a type of secret weapon that Chala is jealous of.

He himself finds everything about Zuzie utopian. The world is simply centered around dem. Saying it out loud is hard for him. He speaks German, but the language doesn't always want to come out of his head. Zuzie says that's from the transit camp. "Most people leave that place broken." Tad doesn't know if that's true. He *does* know that he never wants to go back there. Nearly every night he dreams about it. About having to go back. As if there were a crack in his sleep through which the past breaks in to poison his body and every thought.

"You're cut in half," Zuzie told him. "A part of you still lives in the transit camp. The crack somehow holds both pieces together."

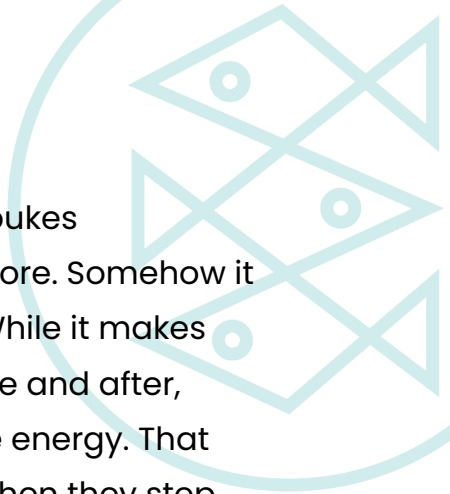
Zuzie always sees the world in weird ways like that. Tad likes it. He likes everything about Zuzie. Really. Everything.

One time Chala bent down to give Tad a kiss, and Zuzie shoved her away and yelled, "Hey, don't you see he's still a child?"

Chala rolled up laughing. And Zuzie had an expression in her seeing eye as if the laugh behind it would soon break out. It gave Zuzie pleasure to treat him like a little brother.

Tad would like to be bigger, at least as big as Chala, who is almost as big as Zuzie. But he's a head shorter. He also finds himself too thin, would like to have more muscles. Zuzie carries injectable medical gels in her stomach and arms that are based on hyaluronic acid. Fake muscles. They look like hard worms under the skin. You can make muscles like that in the background. Tad doesn't have the crypto or guts to do it. Aside from that, he's afraid that the injections won't make any difference in the end. Zuzie also has real muscles in deir back and legs. Dey take boosters for it and stuck a couple in Tad's mouth once. The pills made him sick for two days, and he had nightmares. Dreamed intensely of the camp. Even worse than it actually was, and that is a no-go. Zuzie never offered him more again.

All the kids deal for the phantom net; in return they're provided with the barest necessities. It's never enough. There are always new substances they don't know and absolutely want to try out. Or something they don't



want, but they can't get away from. Tad joins in, even if he pukes afterwards or has blurry vision or doesn't feel his arm anymore. Somehow it always goes away and is never as awful as he first thinks. While it makes him sick, Zuzie and Chala feel twice as alive. The days before and after, they're pumped, full of nervous energy that they take for life energy. That wears Tad out just as much as the long hours in between when they step away together and for themselves alone. He doesn't know where they go; they never take him along. They leave him behind in a city that threatens to crush him like the trash compactor he fell into as a toddler. He has no real memory of it, only knows the feeling of suffocating, as if breathing were suddenly too difficult and his throat too narrow.

His drone, plummeting. Like an enemy attack directly at them. Just in time they duck. First Tad, then Zuzie, finally Chala. No, Chala is hit. In the head.