



Excerpt Translation from:

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(Be Still, Sweet Lips)

by Janet Clark

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A translation by Sarah Tolley

[...]

## Prologue

I've done it. She is sinking into the bottomless boggy moorland.

I walk faster, pursued by thoughts of her dead, pale body. I tremble. Her scornful laughter rings in my ears. I'm hurrying now. It's dark and I can't see where I'm going any more, I can only hear her terrible laughter. *Ha ha ha, look at yourself, you're just a joke... standing here, with no idea what to do next... Ha ha ha.*

...

Where am I? Have I turned back on my tracks? Walked in a circle? Everything looks the same in the torchlight. Leaves, twigs, mud. Darkness. I must watch where I am walking. The moor is treacherous.

I come to a stop. Close my eyes. Everything is whirling round around me. I hear her voice, like an echo, and it just won't keep quiet. I clap my hands over my ears, but her laughter rings on inside my head. "What do you want?" I yell into the night. "It's your own fault!". The laughter falls silent. To start with, I am relieved, but a couple of heartbeats later I can't bear the sudden quietness any longer.

A screech owl calls, giving me a fright. I open my eyes.

*You've got to think clearly, concentrate!* The only thing that matters now is not losing my grip on the situation. No more mistakes. I wipe the tears from my face with the sleeves of my denim jacket. The rough cloth scrapes over my face and immediately, the dreadful image returns. Her staring eyes.

The horror in them. I try to suppress the image, and concentrate on gazing at the dark forest. But her eyes keep on staring at mine they seem to be everywhere.

Beseeching. Disbelieving.

I hear her voice again. Hissing softly like a viper.

"Murderer!" she hisses.

"I'm no murderer! You're to blame for it!" I shout into the silent night, and go on saying it like a mantra. "It's your own fault! Can you hear me? You alone are to blame!" I feel the fury bubbling inside me like lava, just before the volcano spews out its innards.

What if someone were to find her? If her trail leads to me?

If I get arrested? Condemned. Locked away like a criminal.

Then she would have won.

My life would be destroyed. Destroyed all over again.

For good, this time. Just like her death.

My foot lashes out at a tree with all its strength and I groan when the pain shoots up my leg. Then I feel sick. I need to vomit. Exhausted, I sink down onto the forest floor, and rest a while. Breathe in great gulps of the aromatic forest air.

Feel the earth beneath my hands. See the stars above me.

And, all at once, I feel really peaceful.

She will not win, because I won't let her win.

This life belongs to me.

I won't let her get me down any more. And I will do everything I can to make sure her grave in the moor remains our secret for ever.

It is growing late. I must stand up and keep walking. I get to my legs, stagger, and try to orientate myself by the stars. – East, I must walk in an Easterly direction.

If only I can reach the road, everything will be alright. I count my steps, and whenever I reach fifty, I check my direction by the stars.

It is difficult finding my way through the bog and the thickets in the darkness. Finally, I stumble onto the road, far away from my car, but that doesn't bother me. It's so good to be walking on tarmac.

### **Thursday 3rd March**

The chattering voices in the packed Cantina covered their silence like a blanket. What could she be thinking about? Was she wondering whether to move on to one of the clubs later on, after all, or had her thoughts turned back to the play? In any case, she hadn't got around to asking Yana how she was feeling, just now, in this place, on her first visit to the Cantina since Marco... since last summer. Ella must have seen how nervous she was, and have noticed her covert glances at the area around the entrance, and how uncertain she was about to how she would react, if she happened to meet him here.

So much had changed since the last time they had met up at the Kult Factory. It wasn't the vibrating bass sounds or the rhythmic beats which had driven them away from Europe's biggest party zone, no, they were just the same and yet... it was different. Everything felt different, since she could no longer feel his arm round her shoulders, or his hand at her hip. They had sat at this very table; it seemed like yesterday to Yana. They'd been hungry and sweaty from dancing, and they'd rushed up the steps to the Cantina, and slumped down on the wooden benches, delighted to discover that pasta was being served that evening.

Tortellini with cheese sauce. This time, Ella had shared her order with her, as she always did when they decided to pop into the Cantina on their way home.

The waitress passed her table carrying a tray with lots of plates on it and her nose picked up the intensive aroma of the cheese sauce. She dabbled her spoon listlessly in the tomato soup, and spread the dollop of soured cream in a star shape over the surface. Then she spooned some of the soup over a thin slice of bread and watched the bread soak it up, its white crumbs turning red, until the middle part broke away and plopped into the soup, and promptly sank.

“Could you please stop doing that!” Ella pulled a face and shook her head. “That’s the sort of thing I did when I was five.”

“It’s art,” Yana was fishing for the lumps of bread with her spoon and eating them. “The ability of an object to change in its abstract form”

Ella shook her head again. “Well, sometimes...”

“That’s the title of my assignment. Sanger is such a stupid cow, don’t you think? You had her once, too. If only I had known she was going to take the advanced class...” Yana sighed.

“The submission date is the first Monday after we get back. And I still haven’t a clue what to write about.”

“Believe me, you won’t find the answer in your tomato mess, there.” Ella sipped her beer.

Nobody could drink from a bottle as elegantly as Ella. She was naturally elegant.

Everything about her was elegant; her appearance, the way she talked, her clothes. If Ella were to turn up in torn jeans and a faded T shirt, it would look like the latest designer gear.

In her case, though...

Yana looked at her friend and noticed that Ella was really tense. This must be the tenth time at least that she’s turned to look at the door, as if she were expecting someone. Was she even listening to her?

She could feel anger rising. If Ella turned her head one more time, she would say something about it. And this time, she wouldn’t let herself be brushed off so easily.

Yana decided not to repeat her experiment and pushed the dish to the other side of the table.

“Can’t you think of something? Something truly absurd, that sort of thing.”

Ella pulled the bowl up and chose a spoon from among the cutlery that was stacked in a beer glass, and began to eat. “In my opinion, an advanced course in art is pretty absurd, anyway.”

Yana ignored Ella’s comment. She knew that her friend admired her talent for drawing just as much as she admired Ella’s ability to slip into any theatrical role.

“Imagine the soup is fresh blood and the bread... well, the bread would be... for instance, a sheet!” Yana tapped her forehead.

“The blood of a virgin and a sheet! Transforming purity into...”

She laid the spoon down and used her fingertips to push the bowl back to Yana. "Guten Appetit."

Yana frowned. "Do you know the guy over there?" She nodded towards the right, so as to point him out without being noticed.

"No," Ella replied without looking.

"But he seems to know you..."

Ella's eyes followed her movement. The blond man waved at her. No, he was beckoning Ella. His eyebrows were raised, as if he wanted to tell her to hurry up.

"Just a mo," Ella stood up, "I'll just pop over and see what he wants."

Yana watched as Ella walked past the plain wooden tables to the steel bar with its coloured lighting, and greeted first the blond man then his friend, before leaning against the bar in a relaxed way. Ella was taller than other women in the wine bar, and her blond locks and even features were prettier than theirs. As so often before, Yana felt proud of her best friend.

She guessed that the guy talking to Ella was in his late twenties. His short carefully styled hair and his gear showed that he thought it important to be on trend. She was automatically drawing his features on the table cloth with the end of her spoon. They were hard features, like those of a man who is used to giving orders to people. He snapped his fingers at the barman and shouted something at him. Moments later, Ella was holding a bottle in her hand. She raised it to the other two and drank. Then the guy drew her to one side to say something. Ella nodded several times and then laughed, before replying.

He tapped her shoulder approvingly.

Yana was watching Ella unobtrusively and she noticed how familiar this gesture seemed, as if the two of them had been friends for a long time. Yana felt a pang. She chewed her lower lip thoughtfully while watching her friend from out of the corner of her eye.

Was Ella keeping something from her? No, she couldn't think that.

Maybe the guy was that new neighbour who she spent half the night with, drinking Vodka and Coke, a few weeks ago – with the result that she had missed her history exam the next day, and had been relegated to the exam class all over again.

Yana sighed and played with the remains of the cold tomato soup.

*The ability of an object to change...* what a stupid theme! That Sanger woman was doing her best to ruin drawing for her.

At the same time, she was good at it, better than anyone else on the course, even the Sanger woman admitted that, though she didn't know that Yana never left the house without her sketch pad.

She squinted at Ella again, who seemed to have forgotten all about her.

Now, she was chatting in an excited way with a crowd of people, and taking little sips of beer. Yana shook her head angrily. How long had she been sitting by herself, at this table? Five minutes? Ten? Would *she* have just left Ella sitting here, like a Muppet? Like a lump of stale bread that's still OK for soup, but not for spreading Nutella on at breakfast time?

She banged her spoon on the table, making the remains of the soup spray in all directions. "Wow," she muttered, looking at the tiny red drops on her blue and white striped jumper. She dunked a corner of her napkin into her mineral water and rubbed frantically at the spots, which only seemed to get bigger.

"Tomato stains? Ouch!" Ella's voice made her jump.

Yana dropped the napkin, "Who was he?"

Ella dismissed the question with a wave of her hand, "Ah, nobody." She took the napkin from her saying, "That's not the way to do it; you need some more water."

She went over to the next table and said, "May I?" Without waiting for a reply, she dipped the napkin into the unknown man's water. Yana closed her eyes and shook her head, *How embarrassing was that?* Ella knelt down beside her and pressed the napkin against Yana's jumper.

"Nobody?" Ella finally put the napkin back on the table and sat down.

"Nobody important," she examined her beer bottle and took a sip. "So, what will you be doing during the hols?"

Yana pulled the damp jumper a few centimetres away from her skin; "I am flying to see my father. Until Tuesday." She smiled involuntarily at the thought of the next few days in Berlin.

"Cool. You haven't been there since Christmas have you?"

Yana nodded, "Not since New Year."

She glanced at Ella and saw that she was looking really sad. Was she missing her parents? They had gone on a world tour and had been away four months, now. In the meantime, Ella had changed. She had grown more serious; more grown-up, somehow. She'd lost that carefree attitude that had made her brush every problem away. It crossed her mind that she could invite her to Berlin.

"What about you? What are your plans? Would you like to....?"

"I've got to cram. Chemistry..." Ella made a face. "A terrible subject choice for an advanced class. Be happy that you don't have to mess around with electrons which shoot off in every direction in every shitty benzene ring... And I haven't got a proper grip on my part, yet. On Sunday I'm going to meet up with Roman before the rehearsal; he's already said he's prepared to rehearse with me. I'm tripping up all over the place and the first night is in three weeks' time, surely you're aware of that?"

Yana nodded silently. Yes, she was aware of that. Probably everyone else Yana knew was, too.

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**p. 28**

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It was the screech-owl's cry that woke her. She forced her eyes open and tried to orientate herself. But it was dark.

Pitch dark. She raised her head from the pillow and groaned out loud.

Pain shot through her temples and exploded behind her forehead. She laid her head carefully back on the pillow and closed her eyes.

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**pp. 35-41**

### **Thursday, 10th March**

Yana turned her MP3-Player up and nodded her head in time with the sound of Lady Gaga's *Paparazzi*. There was no one at the bus stop; she must have just missed the bus. If Ella's friend hadn't texted her she would have been on time.

But the woman hadn't wanted to stop complaining about Ella, she was that furious about her miserable report.

Funnily enough, she was the one who had been furious with Ella yesterday. After they'd quarrelled at supertime, her mother had come to see her again in her room shortly before midnight. She had made some calls and found out that Ella was not in any of the hospitals in Munich. On the one hand, Yana was relieved, but on the other, disappointed. What was Ella thinking of, to disappear, just like that? Who knows, maybe her mother was right. Ella was unpredictable. That was the wonderful thing about her. One never knew what she would think of doing next. Maybe she really was running away from some kind of problem, and letting the grass grow over it while she was sunbathing in Ibiza. After all, flights were dirt cheap in March and Ella had plenty of money. But that didn't account for her mobile being turned off. Ella never turned it off. Yana read Ella's SMS for the hundredth time:

"Don't forget, tomorrow at 7, common room. Got something to tell you.

Ella"

She'd wanted to tell her something. But what? That she needed time out? Or why she needed to take time out? Why did she write "got something to tell you", and then didn't even bother to cancel?

It made no sense, however unpredictable she was.

There were certain rules that even Ella observed. Reliably. And one of them was to cancel appointments if something happened to stop her getting there on time.

The bus drove round the corner. She got on it and sat down by the window, near the back door. The bus set off with a jolt.

She drove Ella out of her thoughts and resorted to looking at the house fronts that they were driving past. At the third stop, the bus waited a bit longer, to allow a wheelchair user to roll up the ramp. Yana watched as a man took a newspaper from a paper stand and walked off reading it. She tried to read the headlines, but the booth was too far away. She screwed up her eyes and concentrated on picking out the letters.

Man dead 2 weeks in apartment!

She couldn't read the lines below that. Yana was reminded unwillingly of something one of her friends had told her. Her grandfather had been changing a bulb, and had been given such a shock that he'd lain in his flat for more than a week, before he'd been found, literally at the very last minute.

Yana felt a hot flush flow through her body. What if Ella had been hurt? What if she was lying helpless in her flat, incapable of moving and waiting desperately for help? Had she fallen off the ladder while cleaning the windows? Or because she'd had too much to drink, again?

Without pausing to think, Yana jumped up just as the driver was closing the doors of the bus. Scarcely twenty minutes later, Yana was standing in front of Ella's main door. The windows were closed. Yana rang the bell. Nothing. She hesitated a moment, then she rang Kilian Lenz's bell. He was Ella's neighbour, with whom she had apparently spent half the night talking about God and the world. After a few minutes, she tried the bell again.

"Hello?" the voice that came out of the intercom sounded flustered.

"I'm a friend of Ella's. She's not opening her door."

"So?"

"Please can I come in?" Yana said quickly before he shut her off.

"It's not a good time."

"Please!"

Instead of an answer, Yana heard a buzzing sound and threw herself against the door. She raced up the steps to the third floor and knocked at the door to Ella's neighbour. The door opened and a guy in his mid twenties looked at her with enquiringly, while he lifted a jacket off the ironing board and put it on.

"Hello, I am Yana, a friend of Ella's. I've not be able to get hold of Ella for a few days – since Tuesday, to be precise. Maybe you've seen her during the last few days? "

He shook his head. "I've been away a lot, and I've only just came back from a rather long trip away. Sorry. I can't help you there."

"I was only wondering... what if she's lying in her flat, and needs help?" Yana realised that Kilian was in a rush, but she didn't want to let him go.

"In that case, she would surely call out, or knock, you can hear everything here."

He frowned slightly, as if thinking.

"But, what if..."

"You're Yana, aren't you? I'm Kilian." He held out his right hand. "Ella has shown me the funny photos of you two on her fridge. She's told me about you."

"Yes." They really were funny photos. Marco had shot them beside Lake Waldschwaig, last year, when Marco was still... no! Not now. Yana shoved all thoughts of Marco to the back of her mind. Kilian signed to her to wait and disappeared into his flat. Yana could hear him opening a drawer and rummaging around in it. He was soon back, saying, "Here". He handed her a key, "Ella left this with me, in case she ever locked herself out."

"Oh," Yana took the key and then didn't know what to say.

"Check the flat out and then put the key back in my letter box. I've got to go now, sorry."

He strode onto the landing and stood beside her to lock his door.

"Oh, yes, and if you find her, remind her that last week was when she was going to give me back my money."

Giving back money? Ella had borrowed money? Before Yana could ask, Kilian was already racing down the stairs.

Yana frowned as she opened the door to Ella's flat and walked inside. The narrow, pale yellow passage that opened onto all the rooms was in semi-darkness. The doors to the kitchen, bathroom and bedroom were shut and only the living room door was letting some light in. It smelled musty as if nobody had aired the place for days. There was something uncanny about it all. Yana remembered acutely how nice the flat used to smell, and how Ella had sometimes even gone around spraying it after cooking, until the aroma had been obliterated by an artificial essence of roses. Today, at any rate, there was no scent of roses in the air.

“Ella?” She listened to the silence, but only the fridge replied with its regular humming sound. She was growing increasingly uneasy. She turned the light on and went into the bathroom. As if in a slow motion film, she pressed the latch and walked in. Nobody. The white tiles gleamed, as if they had just been polished. A turquoise towel had been hung to dry over the washing basket, which exactly matched the mosaic border. The toilet cover was down, the basin had been carefully cleaned. That was definitely Ella’s touch. Yana didn’t know anyone who was as tidy as Ella. Even her mother could not compete.

She pulled the shower curtain back with a sudden movement, and glanced at the bath-tub. Then she went out of the bathroom and inspected the bedroom and kitchen. In the bedroom, there was only a single white fitted cupboard, apart from the oversized Latin-style bed, and the huge picture above it. It covered the entire length of the wall, along with a bedside table on which lay a radio clock and two tidy piles of books.

Yana was surprised to see her clothes on the smooth bed cover. It looked as if Ella had laid them out to pack.

She walked round the bed to make sure Ella was not lying on the ground there. Then she opened the cupboard door and peered inside. She didn’t know what she hoped to find there and was relying on her instinct, which seemed to be telling her what to do next. When she opened the last door of the cupboard, the cat’s scratching tree fell out. Ella had bought it for the abandoned cats which she occasionally cared for, until a new family turned up and took the animal away. That was so typical of Ella, she loved animals, especially cats; she was even prepared to commit herself to them, but she never wanted to care for an animal on a permanent basis. A brief intermezzo, cuddles, strokes, the best cat food, and spoiling them in every way, and then she would give them away before it became a habit. It was the same with her friends. She always went for short-term relationships, and no sooner than they turned serious, Ella would do a bunk.

Yana removed the half-full sack of cat litter, which had caused the scratching tree to tip over, and stowed it next to the scratching tree, so that it had more space and wasn’t leaning against the Hoover. She closed the cupboard doors, glanced into the bedroom for the last time, and then went into the kitchen.

Here too, everything was tidy, not a crumb to be seen on the little table or the dark wooden work surface, which seemed to stand out from the white fitted kitchen cupboards even more starkly than usual. The room seemed completely untouched, and there was nothing to be seen apart from a mug and a cereal bowl in the sink.

Yana opened the fridge. The top shelf featured a battery of ready-made sauces, along with mustard pots, and jam jars. There was practically nothing beneath them. A cucumber, a lump of cheese in a Tupperware box, a carton of milk and a packet of gnocchi. She closed

the fridge door, causing several piles of tins of cat food to wobble perilously. Then she walked slowly into the living room.

The closer she drew to the half-open door, the more nervous she grew.

What if Ella was really lying there? If she had stopped breathing? She could feel her knees wobbling. She lent a hand against the cheerful yellow wall for support and walked on slowly, one step after another, towards the door, which now seemed much bigger than the other doors in the flat. Yana pushed against it with bated breath and cast a glance inside the room. It was empty.

Relieved, she opened the door to the balcony to let some fresh air in, and peered behind the sofa before sitting down on it. What now?

At least she knew that Ella was not here. Yana's eyes were running over the black shelves filled with files and books, when the phone rang, making her jump. The answerphone cut in, saying, "Hi there, this is Ella, I'm not here right now, but do leave a message. See you!"

Yana listened intently. "Ella, if you..." The answerphone cut off right in the middle of the message. Was the tape full? Yana tried to link the man's voice to a person, but in vain. She was pretty sure she had never heard the voice before. She went over to Ella's desk, where the phone was, and wondered whether to listen to the messages.

The answerphone light was flashing red. Her finger hovered briefly over the 'play' button, but then she removed it. No, that would almost be like reading someone's diary. It was a step too far. While she was drawing her hand back, she spotted Ella's address book. Without thinking, she picked it up and glanced inside.

Most of the names in the slim exercise book were familiar, but she was surprised how many she had never heard of. She grabbed the phone and dialled the number of the first unknown name.

The engaged tone rang out. She put the phone down and dialled the next number. A mailbox popped up. She had replaced the handset and was dialling the next number, when there was a loud crash. Adrenalin raced through her body. She stood very still and concentrated on every sound in the flat. However, all she could hear was the humming of the fridge. She crept on tiptoes to the door of the living room and peered into the passage. Nothing. What sort of noise had it been? It had clearly come from the flat.

From the kitchen? She moved silently to the kitchen door and gave it a gentle push. The door squeaked gently as it opened. Yana instantly froze. Was she really going to have a look and see what had made the noise?

Don't be stupid, she thought and threw the door open. On the floor, in front of the fridge, lay one of the tins of cat food.

She picked it up with trembling fingers and caught herself peering constantly at the door as if scared that a man with a drawn knife was standing there, waiting for her. All at once, she couldn't stand it any longer in the flat. She dropped the phone and the tin on the ground and bolted for the door.

[...]

p. 64

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Her eyes were turned towards the window. When she lay down, she could see the tips of the bare trees. Gnarled branches bearing thin twigs that shook in the wind. She could follow the movements of those twigs for hours while she tried to work out how long she had been here. She could not remember being anywhere other than between these four walls. But she knew that she must have had another life before then. A life outside this hut, a life that had been wiped from her memory, just like her name.

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pp. 71-78

The crazy sound-mix, shifting from Techno to Hard Rock and back to Reggae, which had previously always had a magical effect on Yana, making her dash inside the club and mingle with the dancers, or chill out with semi-strangers at the tables and benches, simply failed to register this evening. She was concentrating entirely on her task, chatting to the bouncers, and almost always managing to stick her flyers up where they were most likely to be noticed. She made a point of approaching the groups of smokers that clustered outside the clubs and bars to ask them about Ella.

Yana was amazed at how friendly people were, and how many of them remembered Ella. She must have been here pretty often lately – at least, more often than she had told Ella. Why had she been putting Ella off for weeks, now, pleading no time on account of revising for her Abitur exams, when she had clearly spent her evenings hanging around these places? And who had she been going out with?

Once again, Yana felt a very familiar pang.

Presumably Ella had not told her about it because she hadn't wanted Yana to be there, or because she was aware of how she felt when she went into the Kult Factory? Because she

knew very well that she would be desperate to ask Ella if she had seen Marco, who he had been with, and whether he had asked after her - though each item of information bored into her like a thorn in an open wound, getting hooked in and further delaying the healing process. Jan sighed. She realised that it must have been trying and had probably really got on Ella's nerves.

Privately, she swore that those days were definitely over. For the first time, she really wanted to draw a line under the business with Marco. That was such a wonderful feeling that it gave her a new burst of energy as she reached the last stage on her round. It was the antiques shop, which was closed in the evening. She was pleased, and stuck a flyer on the panel. That's it, she thought, taking her mobile out of her pocket. *Wait in the Cantina*, she texted Fabian. Then she walked to the end of the street, turned into the Coca-Cola-Road and entered the Cantina. She forced herself very deliberately not to seek out Marco, and sat down at the nearest free place. She stared at the menu, without deciding. The aroma of garlic bread reached her nose and settled there. In fact, after that huge plate of curry for supper, she shouldn't be hungry, but the longer she stared at the menu, the more her appetite grew. A plate of finger-food, or a burger with chips? She couldn't make up her mind, and resorted to muttering an old nursery rhyme.

"Yes?" The waiter had popped up out of nowhere, and was standing in front of her.

"Which one's won?"

Yana looked up. The waiter was waiting patiently for her order.

He didn't have a pen or a paper pad, and, unlike the other employees, wasn't wearing black and white gear, but the new G-Star Jeans which she liked so much, and an extravagant, rather worn, shirt. His straw-coloured hair stuck out in all directions, without looking scruffy. The most fascinating thing about him were his blue eyes, which sparkled as if he was enjoying a great joke against her.

But he had such a friendly smile that it was almost impossible to believe that he was making fun of her. So friendly, so gentle... so irresistible. Yana realised that she had been staring at him for far too long. She quickly lowered her gaze and plunged back into the menu. Her stomach seemed to have shrunk during the last few seconds and she was no longer hungry.

"I recommend the burger, it's really top-quality stuff, and not as fatty as the finger-food, which is all fried stuff, scampi, calamari, onion rings..."

She laid the menu aside. Once again, his eyes held a magical attraction for her, and she lost herself in them, without being able to figure them out.

"Or, if you can't decide, what about a pizza?" His smile grew even broader. "I can put a special together for you. What's your name?"

"Ya... Yana," she gabbled idiotically, as she thought.

“A *Special Yana pizza*. Wait.” He examined her from top to toe, as if he could tell by looking at her clothes what sort of pizza would best suit her. Her eyes followed his gaze, and noted green Chucks with bright stripes, dark jeans with sewn-on pockets, a cheerful knitted jacket, and red hair. She wished she was wearing her new black top.

“Tomato, mozzarella, aubergine, pepperoni, rocket. With a touch of capers. What do you think?”

“I... think I'll have a ... Beck's Lemon.” Yana would much rather have sunk into the ground. Right here and now, like in an end of the world film, when the ground opens up to reveal a huge flaming red abyss waiting to swallow her up.

“My pizza doesn't seem to have done the trick,” he laughed. “So, a Beck's Lemon. I'll fetch you one, Yana.”

As he turned to go Yana screwed up her eyes and struck her forehead. How could she have been so pathetic? This mega-cool guy must think she's got a screw loose.

Out of the corner of her eyes, she could see him turning round again.

She immediately smoothed out her features, but she was pretty sure he had seen her expression. She could feel her face turning even redder

“If there's anything else I can do for you, just ask for me.” He stretched his hand out to her, saying, “I'm Oliver.”

Yana shook his hand. It felt warm and strong.

“Grand,” she said. Grand? Had she just said *grand*? She let go his hand.

“I'll make sure you get your Beck's.” He went off and spoke to the serving girl at the bar, pointing at Yana. Yana turned away quickly. Thank goodness, her mobile was ringing.

“Yana?” Fabian's voice was just audible in among the noise of techno-beats and thousands of voices, “I need a few more minutes.”

“OK, I'm waiting in the Cantina. Shall I get something for you?”

“What?” Fabian yelled.

Yana held the mobile even further away from her ear. “Shall I get you...”

“What? I can't make you out! Wait!”

Yana heard a door squeak, and the noise level dropped perceptibly.

“Now, then. What did you say?”

“Shall I get you a drink?” She repeated.

“Definitely. A dark Weiss beer, please.”

“OK, see you later,” Yana cut him off. The serving girl Oliver had been talking to came up to her table, saying “One Beck's Lemon.”

“Thanks. Please can you bring a dark Weiss beer as well?” The girl nodded and pulled a notepad and pencil out of her belt pocket.

“Ah yes, and another question – who should I ask about sticking up a flyer, here?”

The girl nodded at the bar. “You’d best ask Oliver about that.”

Yana glanced at the bar indecisively. Oliver was drying some glasses and joking with the woman who was sitting there, drinking beer. Did she really have to make her way over there? Somehow, she didn’t trust herself, after her ‘grand’ entrance, but on the other hand, she was desperate to have another word with him. She opened her bag and drew out a bundle of flyers. Then she took a deep breath and walked up to the bar in a determined way. She stood next to the black-haired woman, who didn’t stop chatting to Oliver. She waited patiently for an opportunity to catch Oliver’s attention.

With every second that passed, she felt increasingly wrong-footed. She was just wondering which would be more embarrassing, to keep on standing there or to give up and slink back to her seat. Just as she was about to leave, Oliver interrupted the woman.

“Sorry, I’ve got to look after our guests. We can continue our chat another time.”

He walked round the counter and stood beside Yana. “Did you want to see me? Maybe you do want a Pizza Yana.”

He grinned cheekily at her.

Yana showed him a flyer. “Can I stick it up here? And maybe put a few down on the tables? You have so many guests and they are more likely to read it while they are waiting for their food than if we were to press it into their hands in the street.”

Oliver took the flyer. His eyebrows drew together as if she had personally hurt his feelings.

“What’s all this about?” he demanded. “This sort of thing is no joke.”

Yana winced. “No, it certainly isn’t. Ella is my friend, and she has disappeared.”

His tense expression lightened somewhat. “Sorry. I thought it was some kind of tasteless gimmick, to make people click on their website.”

Yana shook her head so vehemently that her russet locks flew about. “No, really not. We have already stuck the flyer in some other bars and clubs.” She told him quickly. “It would be really nice, if we could display a few here, too.”

“Shouldn’t the Police be doing this?” His voice sounded friendly again.

“Ella is an adult, which means the Police don’t want to look for her straightaway.

In any case, they think Ella has just gone away.”

“And you have a different theory?” Oliver gazed searchingly at Yana as he handed her back the flyer. Yana blushed, though there was no reason for that.

“Yes, I think something has happened to her. Could you have seen Ella here, not long ago?”

“Could be, her face seems pretty familiar to me. But we have so many guests here every day, and there’s no way I can tell who was here when. He smiled tentatively. Yana could feel disappointment seeping through her body, but she didn’t want to leave it at that.

“The last time we were here, Ella was chatting to a blond man. That was last Thursday,” she pointed out.

“A blond guy? Well, I’m blond, for instance, but I didn’t talk to her. Most nights, I’m only here from 1 am. Today, I’m on earlier, but it’s an exception because a member of staff is ill.”

Yana grabbed a napkin and a biro that were lying on the counter. It took her a few seconds to sketch the face of the unknown blond man who had bought Ella a beer the last time they had visited the place together.

She pushed the napkin over to Oliver. “Do you recognise him?”

“No, I don’t think so.” He picked the napkin up and held it up to his eyes. “You’ve got a great touch. Are you a graphic artist?”

“No, but that’s my dream job!” Yana replied, puzzled.

“I understand, that’s what I wanted to be too,” he said, setting the napkin back on the counter.

“Wanted? Why did you stop? What are you doing instead?”

Yana pressed her lips together. What business was it of hers?

Oliver looked amused, “I work here,” he replied.

The blood shot back into Yana’s face. “Well... sure,” she stammered, “I.. I just thought you were just working here as a temporary thing. I’d better go back to my table, I’ve ordered something else. I’m meeting someone, too.”

“Your friend?”

“Yes, but not my boyfriend, a friend for sure, but then...” She fell silent. Why was she telling him all this? Now he was really going to think that she was besotted with him.

“So, your girl friend’s really disappeared? It’s not a bad joke?”

Yana nodded. Better not to say anything else.

“Then give me a couple of those flyers, and I’ll display them here.”

### **Sunday, 13 March**

Dear Ella,

It’s now six days since you’ve been gone and I will go crazy if I don’t tell you what happened today. Imagine, I was in the Cantina and met a really hot guy – maybe you’d recognise him? He is called Oliver and works there, maybe he hasn’t been there very long, at least I never noticed him before. In any case, he has the most amazing eyes you could ever imagine. No shit. His look is totally cool, too. Blond, blue eyes.

I know what you are going to say, now: Yukk, another Marco type. But he isn’t, absolutely not. He is simply ....ace. Such a pity you weren’t there. What shall I do, now? I can’t keep on running back to the Cantina every day, to order a beer from him. Come back quickly , wherever you are, you’re bound to think of something!

It's after one now, I must go to bed now!

Yana

PS: Anyway, we gave out 1,600 flyers today, trying to find you. It's crazy how many people (apparently) know you by sight. It was a really dumb job and when you really get back today, which I hope, hope, hope, you do, then I WON'T EVEN mention it.

PPS. Who were you always sitting at the window table with, in Tonelli's? And whose boyfriend did you snaffle? And how often were you actually inside the Kult Factory, lately? AND WHY DON'T I KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ANY OF THIS?

[...]

pp. 106-112

### **Wednesday, 16 March**

[...]

Her mobile rang, making her jump. Without thinking, she pulled it out of her trouser pocket.

"Hello?"

"Good morning, Yana, Leisch speaking. I wanted to tell you that we've started looking for Ella. We're just getting a fix on her mobile. The last connection was on Monday night, from the Kult Factory.

Do you know who she could have been there with? Maybe her boyfriend?"

Yana thought hard. Monday night? What was Ella doing in the Kult Factory on a weekday?

"I've no idea. I didn't even know she was there. Normally, we're always at the Kult Factory on a Friday, sometimes it's a Thursday, but Monday..." she replied at last.

"That's a pity," Leisch said, clearing his throat. "I've seen your appeal on the Internet. It's very impressive, I've got to say. I would really like to work with you and your friends."

[...]

Fabian had clearly uploaded the changes that the police had requested, and had linked their Internet site to the appropriate police station. Yana remembered that they had also wanted to publish the link to Ella's webpage in the press.

They were going to bring all the other media into their search. TV, radio and newspapers – it was crazy! All at once, everything was moving very fast – and Yana was still desperate to talk to Roman. But he was still unobtainable. A deep line formed on Yana's forehead. What a terrible situation.

Maybe she should ask her father's advice.

“Yana!” Miriam’s voice echoed up the stairs. “A visitor”

Yana rushed downstairs – who could it be?

Fabian was standing at the bottom, in front of a man who looked like someone who had spent his entire time at school thinking up ways of avoiding games. She had never seen him before. Dark-blond hair, mid-twenties, round glasses.

“This is Patrick,” Fabian said, pulling at his sleeve to make him come forward.

“He knows Ella. She is not the only one who’s disappeared.”

Patrick was cleaning his glasses with great thoroughness, and it seemed to require his full concentration. Yana was wondering if he was doing it to give her time to let his story sink in. His flat-share Sabrina, a good friend of Ella’s, had disappeared without leaving a trace almost three weeks ago. The police hadn’t been able to do anything about it, Sabrina was 26, and there was no reason to fear for her safety. However, apart from her handbag, she’d taken nothing, at least that’s what he thought, though of course he didn’t know every item of clothing that Sabrina owned, after all, he wasn’t her boyfriend, just her flat-share. All the same, he was worried, because normally she told him if she was going away for a while, without fail, and she’d leave plenty of instructions about which mail he was to open on her behalf and which he wasn’t.

Her mobile had been turned off for weeks, and her mail was piling up un-opened on the kitchen window-sill. She had lost contact with her parents years ago, and he did not know how to get in touch with them.

Yana thought feverishly. Sabrina? Ella had never mentioned a Sabrina. She was quite sure about that. What’s more, what was Ella doing, hanging out with a twenty-six year-old? Or, the other way round, what did a twenty-six year-old want from Ella? She scrutinised Patrick discreetly. Should they trust him? Who could tell? Maybe he even had something to do with Ella’s disappearance and simply wanted to find out what the police were doing, by telling them this tale.

“Will you help me?” Patrick’s voice shattered the silence. “It wouldn’t make much trouble for you, to add Sabrina to your website. Together with the Police search, it’s guaranteed to get thousands of visitors.”

“What do we get out of it?” Fabian asked.

“You’ll get a bigger search. If the two of them have disappeared, then any clue that leads to Sabrina will also lead to Ella.”

Fabian nodded thoughtfully.

“I’m not so sure,” Yana was trying to signal to Fabian. “We are now working with the Police and we can’t determine the content of the website, just like that. We have to discuss it first.”

Fabian glanced at Yana with an enquiring expression.

“Yana never told me about Sabrina. That’s weird, isn’t it? After all, I’m her best friend.” Yana turned to Fabian, but he didn’t seem to have noticed that she was trying to tell him something. Instead, he pulled his cap deeper over his forehead and then pushed it back.

“I totally don’t think it’s stupid. And it’s our website, Yana, we can do what we want with it, and I don’t need to ask any cops for permission.”

“But we don’t know if Ella and Sabrina really did have anything to do with each other,” the words burst out of Yana.

She felt Patrick’s eyes gazing searchingly at her. Then he took a mobile out his jacket pocket and pressed a few buttons on it before showing it to Yana. “Is this enough evidence?” he asked.

Ella was grinning at her from the little screen. On her right, a woman with short hair was laughing into the camera and on her left, a dark-haired man was kissing her on the cheek. All that could be seen of him was part of his profile. Yana had never seen the woman or the man before. But the girl in the middle was definitely Ella, and the photo was not that old, since Ella already had her new hairstyle with the soft layering which made her hair look much fuller. Was Patrick right?

Could the disappearance of the two girls really be connected?

“So, who is the man kissing Ella’s cheek?” Yana asked, still not completely persuaded by Patrick’s story. Patrick stared at her in dismay. “It’s Toschi of course, don’t you recognise him?”

“Strange to tell, I never even saw the guy before this.”

This time, Patrick smiled in teasing way and replied, “You don’t know Toschi? Ella’s boyfriend? Although he was living with her?”

Yana jumped. Ella had a boyfriend? A BOYFRIEND?

Who was living with her?

It felt as if Patrick had kneed her in the stomach.

[...]

**p. 120**

### **Thursday 17 March**

Hello! Ella,

I am so furious with you, you’ve no idea how much!

You’ve got a boyfriend? Who lived with you? You hang out with him and this Sabrina, who I also never heard of before, and are permanently in the Kult Factory? And all three of you

have disappeared? Where are you then? In the Beach Club in Spain? So, Timinator was right after all? Maybe Sabrina is the other beach babe that he was so keen to keep in touch with.

HOW SCREWED UP CAN YOU BE, YOU TELL ME??????????????

You were always going on about how stressed you are, about your A-levels and your part, and how little time you had, and I, stupid cow, believed you.

Why didn't you just tell me about Toschi and Sabrina?

Are you fed up with me? Is Ella such a big girl now, she only wants to hang out with twenty year-olds?

Were you scared that I would want to come along, and that I would be cross with you?

What's more, I've been such an idiot, telling the Police about you! I'm literally shaking with fury as I write this. You are so lucky not to be here. And when you do get back, I'll put the screws on and swear blind your cats were in the flat, too bad if you get in trouble with the RSPCA. You've deserved it alright.

[...]

pp. 138-142

The stuffy atmosphere was bothering Yana, as was the droning sound of the bass drums, which were making her whole body vibrate; each beat made her feel ever more nauseous. She ought to have eaten something, at least a banana or a yoghurt. She shoved her way through the swaying mass of sweaty dancers and tried to find Marvin. Once beside the bar, she groped inside the peanut bowl and stuffed a handful in her mouth.

She immediately felt a rush of carbohydrate, fending off the looming low sugar attack. The urge to vomit went away. Yana took the bowl, shook the last nuts into her hand and licked them up.

"You're Yana, aren't you?"

Yana jumped. She quickly put the bowl back and wiped her hand on her jeans. The coloured lights on the dance floor made the guy's hair look green. She tilted her head and wondered where she had met him.

"Don't you remember me?" He leant his head a bit nearer to her and yelled, "Killian, Ella's neighbour."

Kilian Lenz! The key!

"Killian! Hi." She clutched her head as if amazed at her own stupidity. "Sorry. Sure, I remember. Of course I do."

"What?" Killian leant towards her again, his nose almost brushing against her cheek.

“You’ve got to talk louder!”

“Of course I remember you,” Yana yelled.

He nodded towards the entrance,

“Come outside, I’ve got something to tell you.”

It was chilly under the clear, starry sky, but not too cold.

Yana breathed the air into her lungs and waited for the ringing in her ears to abate. Killian was still standing beside the bouncer, lighting a cigarette. What did Killian want to say to her? Had he heard something about Ella?

“Your laces are undone!” All at once, Miriam was standing beside her, holding a soft, bulging doner kebab with extra onions. Yana’s mouth filled with saliva.

“Hey, give me a bite, please!”

Miriam reluctantly handed the kebab to her.

“Don’t be greedy, now!” Yana took the kebab. She could see Killian over the top of the onions, waving at her. Yana hesitated.

What, if Killian mentioned the key? Miriam would grow suspicious. She nodded at Miriam to tell her to wait and walked over to Killian. Just one metre away, she trod on her lace and stumbled. Desperately seeking to keep her balance, she pressed her hands together as if the kebab was going to hold her up, and managed to stay upright. She heard a loud splat as the contents of the kebab shot out and landed in front of Killian, splattering in all directions and leaving white and brown stains on his shoes and trousers. A cigarette in mouth, Killian’s eyes shifted from Yana to the mess on his shoes, and back to Yana again.

“Idiot!” Miriam ripped the empty kebab out of Yana’s hand, shouting, “You crazy? You’ll make *me* go completely crazy! Look at my kebab! All that’s left is a soggy pitta bread with nothing inside.”

“Sorry.” Yana ignored Miriam and squatted down in front of Killian, saying, “I’ll clean it up for you.” She wiped his shoes with her hand, smearing the fatty doner kebab filling over the expensive-looking suede.

Kilian pulled his feet out of the way, saying, “Leave it. You’re making it worse.” He looked at his shoes and shook his head, muttering, “I might as well chuck them out.”

“Sorry,” Yana tried to find the right thing to say, “I’ve never done anything like this before.”

“She does this sort of thing every day. She is a walking catastrophe, she ought to wear a sign saying keep your distance. 5 metres. Believe me, I’m her sister.” Miriam took a bottle of water out of her handbag and moistened the kebab wrapper before handing it to him. “Use it to remove the sauce from your trousers.”

“Forget it.” However, he did take the napkin and used it to wipe the big lumps off his trousers and shoes. He smiled at Miriam, saying, “You have my heartfelt condolences.”

She smiled back, "Thanks."

"The last time I saw Yana, she talked me into handing over Ella's key and promised faithfully to put it in my letter box." He threw the dirty napkin on the floor. "Where do you think that key is now?"

Yana swallowed. She hoped he would not tell Miriam when she got the key, and hopefully Miriam would not tell him when she found the cat.

"Gully?" Miriam scratched her head provocatively, "No, wait a mo! She'll have put it in Ella's letter-box, along with the key that opens it."

Kilian laughed. "Sounds like you were speaking from experience." He grew serious again, and said, "The cops have got it. I never saw anything like it. I was just walking home after a doing a shift at work, really tired, when this cop called. He had Ms Angermaier's key and told me to call in at the station as he needed to discuss the situation with me urgently..."

Yana sighed with relief. Although she hadn't told Miriam about Leisch keeping hold of Ella's key, she did know that he had been inside Ella's flat with her.

"I can't help that!" Yana told him, "I didn't ask Leisch to keep the key. He just didn't give it back to me."

"The question is, why did you give him the key in the first place? Damn it, Yana, have you got the slightest idea how much trouble you are making for Yana, by letting the cops snuffle round her flat? They've been waiting for this opportunity." Kilian threw his stub on the ground and ground it out with his foot.

"I gave you the key because you were her best friend. Shit, man, with friends like you, who needs enemies?"

This last comment struck home. Yana gave a sob, she could feel her nose quivering, and tears filling here eyes. He had a point.

Clearly, looking for Marvin had been a really stupid thing to do.

Maybe he had wanted to give Ella a part and was now keeping his distance because she had launched a search for him with a photofit picture, as if he were a criminal.

"Hold on a second," Miriam's voice had lost its sardonic overtones from when she had been poking fun at her. "Yana is alright. She's super clumsy, yup. But Ella could not hope for a better friend. Do you think it's just for fun that she's wearing herself out, hanging out in this place every night?"

"I don't know about that, but she's not doing Ella any favours that way. Believe me. If there's anything that Ella doesn't need right now, then it's someone telling the cops about her." Kilian reached for his cigarettes and took one out of the packet.

"Why?" Yana shouted furiously, "What's so bad about doing that?"

She felt as if Kilian had punched her. "She's not committed any kind of crime!"

Kilian hooted with laughter, "Sure, Ella, the complete innocent! Listen to me, little Red Riding Hood, I don't know where you've been living for the last few months, but wherever it was, go back there, and leave Ella to lick her wounds in peace, wherever she chooses to do that."

Yana started to say something, but Miriam laid a hand on her arm and pressed it gently as if giving a silent command to a well-trained animal. Yana kept quiet.

"What wounds, Kilian? What are you talking about?" Miriam spoke gently and persuasively, "You know, I really don't want us to do Ella any more harm."

"Toschi, of course!" He clicked his lighter several times in vain. "The old lecher!"

Yana felt another slight pressure on her arm and bit her tongue. Miriam too said nothing.

Kilian's eyes moved from Yana to Miriam; "So you really don't know what's happened?" he marvelled.

Miriam shook her head.

"Then Ella is lonelier than I thought" At last, a flame appeared. Kilian lit his cigarette and inhaled deeply. Finally, he wagged a finger at them in a reproving way. "No, no. Ladies, don't stare at me like that. If Ella didn't tell you anything, then you won't get a peep out of me either. Forget about it."

[...]

pp. 176-177

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Her sobs strike me like blows from a whip. I cover my ears and run out of the room. Forget to empty the bathroom bucket and put the rubbish out. With trembling hands, I lock her in and race along the narrow path, back to my car.

How could it have happened? How could the mask have slipped off my face? It was only for a second, only a second without the cardboard covering, but I saw her eyes at once, and knew she had recognised me. She knows about Sabrina.

She now knows why she is my prisoner. She realises that I have read her expression. That she now represents a terrible risk for me. That she has signed her own death warrant with just one glance.

Her eyes, so full of horror, full of pleading. Then her tears. Too much for me, I can't bear it. She is so scared. So vulnerable.

So insecure.

She reminds me of myself.

Scared, vulnerable, insecure.

So many years of loneliness. Abandoned by the only person who loved me. Dumped by the person who detested me for that reason. I don't want to remember it. Nor my loveless home. Nor the eternal stink of vinegar cleaning fluid, the sign of the villagers' strict sense of duty. Nor the village. Nor the narrow-minded school kids, who punished me for being different. I want to hang on to my new life. A life full of light and friends, full of dreams and hope. I will fight for it. I'll put a stop to Yana, before she destroys my new plan, as well. She put the cats in Ella's flat. I saw her doing it. She lied. She will not give up. I have got to know what she will do next. I must get even closer to her. I must at all costs prevent her from forcing the search to continue.

No matter what the cost.

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[...]

pp. 199-206

### **Thursday 24 March**

[...]

Her mobile rang. She got up from her desk, groaning, and staggered over to the bed, where it was lying.

"Hello!"

"Yana, hi! Oliver here."

Oliver. She dropped it on the bed. Oliver, her new utopian love interest? What did he want? To know what had happened to Marvin? Angrily, she grabbed the pencil that was lying on her pillow beside her sketchpad, and began to draw.

"This is a surprise," Yana tried to keep her voice neutral.

"I saw you have closed down your website. Have you found Ella?"

"Why do you want to know?" The pencil dug into the sketchpad.

"Hey, you asked me to keep you updated, if I heard something. But there would be no need for that, if she was sitting right beside you on the sofa, would there?"

She felt as if Oliver had slapped her. Oliver was not Marco. He actually really did want to know if she still needed help.

"Of course, sorry," she muttered. "I'm rather down in the dumps at the moment. Ella has not come back. But we aren't looking for her anymore. I was going to ring you later on."

"Oh?"

Yana was not sure if that 'Oh?' referred to the cancelled search or to her call. "To tell you all about it."

“Is something wrong?” He sounded truly concerned.

Before she could do anything to prevent it, the tears came rushing back.

“Everything’s OK,” she managed to squeak.

“Doesn’t sound that way.”

The tears were now pouring down her face and she couldn’t reply.

“Yana?”

She snuffled into the phone.

“Has something happened to Ella? You only said she hasn’t come back. Does that mean....”

He was now speaking more quietly, “she’s never coming back?”

Yana stuck her nose up and pulled herself together. She took a deep breath and breathed out again. “I don’t know. I don’t know where she is or what she is doing and whether she will come back. And I don’t care, either.”

“Oh? That doesn’t sound right.”

Yana kept quiet. What was she supposed to say to him? That Ella has been going out with Marco? That she’d been summoned for misleading the Police? That she had brought financial ruin on her mother by telling a harmless lie? That Ella had been living a new life for ages, and had no time for her former best friend? Or that, in spite of everything, she was still missing Ella so much, that her heart was aching?

“Yana?” He was now talking very softly. “Would you like to tell me about it? We hardly know each other, but sometimes it is easier to talk to a stranger.”

“I don’t know.” The pencil she was holding was scribbling faces on her block. Simple faces, but they all looked like Oliver.

“Think about it. I will be in the Cantina this evening, at ten, and you can drop in any time.”

“Do stop channel hopping!” Yana’s mother put the iron down and turned her blouse round 180 degrees before adding, “I want to watch the 6 o’clock news.”

Yana switched back to the 3rd programme and lay down on the sofa. She was tired, as if she hadn’t slept for a week.

But she’d gone early to bed yesterday. Her mother thought it was due to the psychological stress, fear of discovery and guilt feelings that she had been carrying around for a week.

Generally speaking, her mum had been amazing.

Not a word, no lecture. She hadn’t even mentioned house arrest.

Yana closed her eyes. They had spent ages talking. Her mother had told her that Miriam had revealed Ella’s misdeeds, and that Ella had presumably wanted to tell Yana about her slip-up on the Thursday before she flew to Berlin. At least that was what Ella had promised, because

that was the day when Miriam's ultimatum had expired. That was why her mother had waited for her that evening, to catch her after Ella's confession.

In the event, though, her mother had quickly caught on that it hadn't happened.

Yana found that she was constantly thinking of Ella's text message. Now she understood what Ella had wanted to tell her so urgently – she hadn't felt up to it that Thursday evening, in the Cantina, and had planned to confess on the Tuesday after the rehearsal.

Would it have been less awful to have heard the truth from Ella's mouth?

"Has Leisch phoned yet?" her mother asked, rousing her from her thoughts.

Yana said no. Each time the phone rang, she jumped. Not because she hoped that Oliver was on the line, but because she was so anxious about what Leisch was going to accuse her of having done.

How high would the fine be? She didn't dare think about it. She stood up.

"Would you like some tea?" she asked.

Her mother was putting the blouse on a hanger. "Yes please, apple tea, if there's some left."

Yana fiddled about in the kitchen while she prepared two mugs of apple tea.

She opened all the cupboards without knowing what she was looking for, and finally took a packet of biscuits from a shelf.

"Yana, quick, they've found Sabrina!"

Yana dropped the biscuits and dashed into the living room. Her mother was holding the remote, and she now turned the volume up.

The screen showed some cordoned-off woodland, where a closed coffin was just being removed. The reporter was looking very concerned.

"... the dead person is the student Sabrina T. who has been missing for several weeks. The young woman was reported missing by her flat-sharer at the beginning of March. The Police did not immediately launch a missing person search because she was of age. It was only when photos of her were published on the website for schoolgirl Elisabeth A., who is also missing, that a public search was launched."

The background now showed a photo of Sabrina.

"Walkers found her body today, in a woodland near Munich. Although decomposition has set in, the Police have been able to identify the student. Sabrina was clearly the victim of a violent attack. We are not yet sure if there was a sexual element."

The photo vanished. Ella appeared in a blown-up photo.

"This makes the disappearance of the schoolgirl Elisabeth A. all the more urgent. She was last seen on Monday, 17 March. Since then, she has vanished without a trace. The search that her schoolfriend launched has been given Police support and has been widened, but

has not produced any results, yet. The Police welcome any calls or information about this case.”

The image changed and Yana’s mother turned the TV off. She walked over to Yana, who was standing frozen rigid in the doorway, and hugged her in silence.

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The newsreader’s lips are moving, but I can’t hear anything. I feel as if a hundred fireworks were exploding in my ear-passages. My mouth is dry. I try to swallow, but don’t have enough saliva. I open my mouth and feel the dribbles that have formed in the corners of my mouth. I wipe them away with my sleeves and reach for a glass of water. The water flows down my throat, leaving a cool trail.

They have found her.

So quickly.

How could that be? The bog was supposed to swallow her forever. And hide her body in its bottomless depths.

It won’t be long before they find me, now.

They will find my fingerprints and work out where the knife comes from.

They will never believe me; they’ll condemn me for something I never did, send me to a Hell, which is worse than anything I’ve experienced before.

My mouth has dried up again. I think of prisoners, and the stories they tell about what happens to sensitive people like me in that place, to weak people who can’t defend themselves. I feel sick and run to the toilet, and vomit.

Then I am quite calm. I can think clearly again.

My top priority is to get ready to run away.

Just a few more days, maybe a week, I don’t need more. And I must keep an eye on Yana.

When Yana sees the news, she will keep on looking. Now, she’ll definitely want to know what happened to her friend, and whether her disappearance is linked to Sabrina’s. Yana is not stupid and as soon as she gets hold of a clue, she’ll find me. And she will put two and two together.

She’s left me no choice. I must stop Yana from shoving her nose into things that do not concern her. Another week.

By then, everything will be arranged. Then I will leave the life I have built up so carefully, and start an even better one.

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The entrance hall smelled of Thai cooking. Yana waited for the lift and sniffed distastefully, and then held her breath until the lift came. Ella had tried for years to convert Yana to Asian food, and had even dragged her along to a special cookery class, all in vain, she simply didn't like it. At last, the lift doors opened. It was just as battered and grimy as the walls. Hopefully, they wouldn't have to move into a flat like these ones, when her mother had to sell the house to pay the police fine. She had found a story on the Internet about a schoolboy who had been charged big time by the police for setting up a fake bomb alert, and his parents had been forced to pay a fine of over 100,000 euro. Had Sabrina's death changed anything? Unlikely, since the police had not launched the missing person search for Sabrina, but for Ella. She was really keen to find out what Patrick wanted. Her phone conversation with him still seemed quite incredible. Like in a spy film. He had to show her something, urgently, and couldn't talk about it on the phone. Leisch's words were ringing in her head. Everyone is a suspect. *Everyone*. Fortunately, she had left a note in the kitchen with his address on it. A thin gleam of light could be seen coming from the furthest flat on the landing. It had to be Patrick's. She hurried along to it, and when she knocked on the door, she noticed that it was ajar.

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