

SAMPLE
TRANSLATION

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LIKE IN A MOVIE

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Like in a Movie

1.

PSYCHE

My life is okay.

What I mean is that mum and dad and I are okay. And my class at school is okay. Well, almost okay. Some of us get on and some don't. But mum says: "Gregory, get used to it, that's what it'll be like when you grow up."

But I'm not quite sure. I don't know why everyone can't get along. In our class there is most, how shall I put it, *disagreement* when Jake, Pete and Jo do things that others don't like. They think they're cool if they break something, turn the rubbish bin upside down or keep interrupting the teacher. When I said I thought this wasn't good, they snapped back that they thought it was very good. When I told mum about this, she just shrugged and said: "You'll find in life that some people think like you and others think completely differently. You've just got to accept it. You've got to be tolerant of others' opinions."

But of course, she doesn't follow her own advice at all. I mean about others' opinions. Let me give you just one example, although there are many. Practically every day I see how what my mum does is different from what she says and thinks. When I told her this once, she shrugged again and said nothing.

Here's an example: when I asked her if I could watch a film on TV that had a red triangle in the top corner, in which it says 12+ she answered, without giving it any real thought, that I couldn't. I then said that there would probably be nothing in the film that I didn't already know or hadn't seen before. But she just looked at me, surprised, and said that the triangle is there because of the violence in films and that there was no way she'd allow her eleven-year-old son to watch violent scenes because it could have a negative effect on my psyche. I immediately objected. I told her I was only one month and ten days short of twelve and she shouldn't take things so literally. She has said herself that I am very mature for my age. But this didn't mean anything to her. She said that the + above the number 12 meant that I had to be *over* twelve. So I asked: "How much over? An hour, two days, a month?" And she said it

was up to her to decide. That the + gave her the chance of deciding how much over twelve. How dumb! How totally stupid! Totally pointless! The + enables parents to seriously abuse their children. In the end mum repeated: "Violent films can have a really bad influence on your psyche." *Psyche*, that's the exact word she used. I'll remember it, I thought. I'd later look exactly what it meant on the internet. And of course I neither gave up nor despaired. I know her well enough to know that you have to be persistent if you want to achieve something. So, I continued my protest by expressing another opinion. *In the news that we watch three times a day there's much more violence than in films*, I tried to change her mind through reason. *And besides*, I went on even though mum had already raised her left eyebrow, which meant that she would soon interrupt: *the violence on the news is much crueller because it's real. And films are fiction. Do you get it?*

Mum is definitely not a tolerant person. I know that now, even though she keeps going on about tolerance. You could say she's a typical example of how it works in real life. She goes on about how people can have different opinions and that we must respect that, while she takes no notice of my opinion when it differs from hers. Needless to say, I wasn't allowed to watch the film. But I did immediately check the word *psyche*.

I got 29 million hits. To put it briefly: the psyche is something we have in our head. But not like an inner organ. The psyche is something like a feeling, something connected with nerves. And mum is often very nervous so it's no wonder that she likes the word. We've all got a psyche. At least that's how I understood it. The psyche isn't the same as the soul. I understood that as well. Even though in our family we don't believe in the soul because we don't go to church. Or we don't go to church because we don't believe in the soul. I've no idea which.

In spite of the number of hits, it's clear that no one really knows what the psyche is. If they knew, there'd be a single answer. *The psyche is ...* But as it is, there's confusion everywhere. That's why I still don't know why the horror film *Friday the 13th* should be harmful to my *psyche*. Maybe because of the large volumes of the red dye they call blood, or because of the kissing and girls without bras. As if running around without a bra was that special. I then saw the film three times with Mark who is in the same class and, besides Tina, my best friend. Once slowly and twice quickly. We fast forwarded the boring scenes and spent more time on the interesting ones. For research purposes only. In order to study why my mum and Mark's mum think that such films have a negative effect on the *psyche* of eleven year olds. I tell you, it's all a mess.

"We must study the film very carefully," I said to Mark.

"Why?" he looked at me stupidly.

"So that we can see why the psyche is a problem."

“Psy-che?” he said and his round glasses steamed up, which meant that he was very confused and thinking really hard. His glasses also steam up like that when we do a maths test. And so, after thinking really hard, he finally said: “Mum hates it when I’m sarcy.”

“Oh my god!” I rolled my eyes. “Psyche has nothing to do with sarcasm.”

He took off his glasses, wiped them on his shirt and put them back on again. As if clearer vision would enable him to understand the *psyche*. He nodded.

I didn’t feel like explaining it to him. I pushed the DVD with the film we’d downloaded into the slot and pressed PLAY.

When we were watching the film for the third time, the bell rang. I pressed pause and opened the door. It was Tina. She was bringing me the notebooks I’d lent her so she could copy what she’d missed when she was off ill. Then we watched the film together for the last time. She thought it was stupid. Especially because the girls’ bare boobs were *silicon*. That’s what she said. That all the actresses who appear in films without their bra on have had plastic surgery. And that she thought this was really dumb. Mark and I immediately rewound the film and checked out the boobs out once more. They didn’t look plastic to us. Tina rolled her eyes and said she knew that we were sickoes, but not that we were *psychos* as well. Mark and I exchanged glances. Tina had also used the word *psyche*. Or a close relative: *psyche*, *psycho*. At this point we stopped studying the film *Friday the 13th*. It didn’t matter, really. Unless such films really do leave invisible consequences on the psyche. And a person changes because of these films. Maybe I really did change. As it happens, only a few days later I found myself staring unwittingly at the chests of girls in year nine. Maybe that was because of my *psyche*. Or the damaging effect of films with a triangle and 12+ in the corner.

I won’t look at the chests of the girls in year nine, I decided. I won’t allow myself to become either a sicko or a psycho. I resisted with great determination. You can prevent many things through sheer willpower. If, for instance, you feel you’ve got a cold coming on, you put on warm clothes and drink huge quantities of herbal tea. I would only look at the faces of the girls from year nine. Or their hair. Or hands. I wouldn’t look below the neck, although that’s the most interesting part. I wouldn’t allow my *psyche* to spoil. And that was that.

MY FAMILY AND OTHER GROUPS

There are three of us in my family.

Mum, I've already said something about her, me, and I'll say a lot more about myself, and dad. I also call him father. If I want something from him, I say daddy. He falls for this. Mum calls him Brad. Which is a very funny name, I'd say. Brad Pitts – Tits! I'd really like to know what he was called when he was at school. They probably teased him and called him Brad Tits... It makes you think of girls without bras. Oh dear, it's getting obvious that *Friday the 13th* really has had a really bad effect on my *psyche*.

My dad works in an office. He's the boss, of which he is very proud, even though he has quite a few bosses above him. He said the other day: "My boss is a real waste of space!"

I didn't get it. What did he mean?

"If I didn't know all these things, the firm would be in such a mess. I've no idea how he managed to get promoted to that position. I suppose he has the right kind of friends. Useless half-wit!"

Useless half-wit. The words led me to conclude that dad didn't have a very high opinion of his boss. So, being a waste of space must be bad as well.

Mum had no intention of commenting on his outburst. She never responds. She usually just nods or acts surprised. But because this time dad was waiting for her to say something, she finally said with a sigh: "It is strange that Victor became your boss."

But because I know her so well, even better than my dad – her husband – knows her, I knew that she couldn't care less. That her mind was on other things. And that she was acting surprised and slightly annoyed only so that dad wouldn't be offended. Dad often says: *I never get any support from anyone. I have to do everything myself!* That's why mum tries to offer at least a bit of sympathy and the support he so much wants.

"Victor, my boss! It's so unfair! He used to copy things from me at school and now he's above me!" dad went on and got so agitated that his ears began glowing like a red traffic light.

Then his mobile rang. The well-known four notes. I think it's from Beethoven's Fifth. I checked it on YouTube. Dad chose that tune for his work calls. It sounds very dramatic. Like the lead-in to a horror story. Like the music that tells you a murderer is going to walk in any moment now

Da da da daaaaaa, it went. Dad rolled his eyes, then took a deep breath and his face changed. A smile spread from one ear to another and his earlobes pulsated in every shade of

red there is. Then he said sweetly: “Ooooooh! Victor! How are you? I was just talking to Mary about you ... What a great team we are, yeah, that’s what I was telling her.”

After that, he just kept on nodding and grinning stupidly as if he’d just found out that his numbers had come up on the lottery, but at the same time had realised that mum had washed his trousers with the lottery ticket in the pocket. This had really happened the summer before. And then the three of us sat there with our fingers crossed, hoping that dad’s numbers wouldn’t come up. I think we must have been the only family in the world that was praying for its numbers not to win. And of course they didn’t. Oh, the relief! And this was precisely the expression on dad’s face when his boss Victor called him. Something between pretend happiness and real sadness. Perhaps there was some anger in there as well, demonstrated by the compressed lips and occasional grinding of the teeth.

I see.

Yes.

I see.

Yes.

I see.

Yes.

Mum and I left the room. I went to my room and mum to the kitchen. That’s where she spends most of her time. When she’s happy, she goes to the kitchen. And when she’s sad, she also goes to the kitchen. The only difference is that when she’s happy, she hops around the cooker, singing and rattling the pots, and keeps asking if anyone fancies pancakes. That’s more than a clear sign that she’s in a good mood. If dad and I don’t want any, she makes them for herself. And then we help her out of solidarity and wolf down about ten pancakes ... But when she’s sad, she sits on her chair in the corner by the window and looks out. She has a large potted plant on the window sill, which looks pretty much like thick grass. This thick grass means a lot to mum as she was given it by her work mates. She used to work in an office. I don’t know exactly, but I think she helped the company calculate all the wages. This is why once a month she was in a very bad mood. And then one day she suddenly wasn’t at work anymore. Her position was scrapped, she said. And her colleagues, who liked her very much, gave her the grass as a leaving present.

Mum hadn’t actually been particularly happy at that office. So during the first week at home, she was in quite a good mood. We had pancakes every day. And then less and less often. It seemed that she wasn’t having a good time without her job, even though she hadn’t enjoyed it. Before she had me, she wanted to become an artist. I found this out by chance when I was rummaging through some drawers and found piles of drawings and paintings. She didn’t want to admit they were hers. But dad told me that she had gone to art school. When I asked her why she didn’t become a painter, she said: “I wasn’t good enough.”

Recently, mum has been sitting in the kitchen a lot, in the corner by the window, looking at the thick grass. Although I think she's really looking out past the grass. Somewhere far into the sky. Because you can't see anything else through our windows if you're sitting on a chair. We live on the eighth floor. And if you're sitting down, all you see is the sky. I checked. I did an experiment. I put three books on the chair so that I was at the same height as mum and then I looked at what she could see. Nothing, I tell you. The grey sky. If it's cloudy and windy, the view is quite interesting as the clouds move to and fro, but otherwise it's just grey. I have no idea why anyone would want to look at the grey sky. It's like looking at a television that's off or a frozen computer screen.

Recently, mum has been sitting in that kitchen corner all the time and looking at the sky.

It's been a long time since she's called from the kitchen: *Does anyone fancy pancakes?*

In my room, I turned on the computer. I went on Skype. I talk to my friend Tina on Skype, she's in the same class as me. We never talk in school. I don't know why. Maybe she doesn't want her friends to think that she likes spending time with me. Well, what can I say – I'm not exactly a model. Not that there's anything wrong with me. I've got legs and arms and everything that a boy my age needs ... I'm just not too popular. And I'm a little, how shall I put it, fat. Although mum says I'm not. But I know I am. And my hair is straight, with a parting. That's how mum wants it. Before I walk into the classroom, I always mess it up. But it doesn't really work. My hair is used to the parting and even if I don't comb it, it lies sideways. One day Mel called me *smarmy*. At first I didn't know why she was saying this, but then it became clear: it was my hair. And I'm different in other ways, too. Like, it seems sensible to me that if I have to go to school, then I listen and cooperate; if the teacher asks me something, I try to reply as best I can. But that's not a very popular thing to do in my class. Jake, Pete and Jo sometimes deliberately act dumb. It seems really stupid to me to pretend to be dumb. But this makes them very popular with the girls. Who knows why?

In general, the girls in my class only hang out with each other. So there are quite a few different groups. Well, four, to be precise.

Tina has roughly half the girls around her, while the other half is gathered around Mel. The girls led by Tina are more beautiful. I mean, nearly all of them already wear bras. I wouldn't even have noticed this if I hadn't watched *Friday the 13th*. It was the film that made me start to notice certain things. Some things became clear to me. That sign in the right corner of the screen, that red triangle with 12+ in it, should actually be seen as something positive. *Educational*, as our class teacher would say, rather than a prohibition. Where was I? The fact that my thoughts jump here and there and that I often don't know *where I am* is also one of my bad characteristics, but I can't help it, there's so much stuff in my head and it's really difficult to be focused on a single thing. Like I said, half the girls are gathered around Tina. And nearly

all of them live in houses or large flats in the centre. Their parents have cars and jobs. Mel's group, on the other hand, comes to school on the bus, they live in blocks of flats, their parents are divorced and unemployed, and hardly any of them wear a bra. I think. Although I'm not quite sure. Another difference is that Tina's girls have good grades and will go on to grammar school and then do economics or at least law at university. Mel's friends have no idea what they'll do after primary school.

The third group are boys. They're led by Jake. All the boys are gathered around him. Nearly all. And then there's the last group – Mark and me. The two of us hang out together. I don't know if I can call us a group. When I Googled the word *group*, I got 5,320,000,000 hits. Which means that *group* is a word that bugs people a lot. But again it's all very confusing. Instead of one clear definition, there are a million different ones. But one thing is clear: *a group is a community of people in a limited area, sharing the same interest, belief, motivation or activity, such as a music group. A group in the animal kingdom, for example a herd, pack or flock, is a more or less separate group of individuals of one species, inhabiting a shared area. Life in a group thus offers a better chance of survival and mutual help, but also competition in the struggle for food and space. Changes in the environment, reproduction processes, weather or climate can influence the appearance of groups.* I wasn't very happy with what I found. What I really wanted to know was whether Mark and I were a *group*. Can two people be a group that has a better chance of survival, whose members offer mutual help, as well as creating more competition in the struggle for food and space? I want to know if Mark and I have any chance at all in comparison to much larger groups in our class. Perhaps we're not a group at all. Perhaps we are just a *reject* from a group. Outcasts. I went and looked up *outcast*. Only 20,200,000 hits. Which probably means that there are more groups in the world than outcasts. And if we're outcasts, we're a minority. And minorities do not fare well. It would be much better if we were a group. But a group has a leader and many members. The two of us could only have one leader and one member. So I think that according to the current situation in our class, we're not a group. We're outcasts. But this bitter realisation I arrived at via the internet does not change the fact that our class is divided into groups. And I don't like us hanging out in groups. But mum says that's how it is in life and I should just get used to it.

And it is precisely because of this division into groups that Tina doesn't want to hang out with me when the other girls are around. And why we talk on Skype every day. As it's free, we sometimes talk for hours.

I turned on the computer.

And connected to Skype.

I went to the loo before Tina answered. I didn't really need to, it was just an excuse. I really wanted to know what mum was doing. It would be great if she was making pancakes. I peeped into the kitchen. Mum was sitting by the window. Her hands were in her lap and she was staring at that grass on the window sill. Or past it, somewhere far.

When I came back to my room, Tina was already waiting for me on screen.

“Where were you?” she asked after I sat down.

I took a deep breath ... I wanted to tell her that I was very worried about mum staring out of the window all the time ... but Tina just went on: “What are you doing?”

“Nothing. And you?” I said because I really couldn’t think of a better answer.

“Waiting for tomorrow,” she said.

“I’m not.”

“Why? School is the only real thing for me. It sucks at home.”

Well, we agreed about that. *It sucks at home*. This was something bothering me, too. I felt this was a chance to tell her how it was in our family. Because in our family things had really sucked for a while now. I didn’t actually know what was wrong. Maybe nothing was wrong and other families lived this way, too. Maybe Tina’s mother also stares out of the window for hours on end. I wanted to talk to Tina about this. So I said: “Yes, it really does suck at home.” But then I didn’t know what to say next.

We looked at each other for a while and then she asked: “Don’t you like school?”

I shook my head.

Skype has a great advantage in electronic communication. It’s much better than a mobile phone, which is something my dear parents have taken away from me now that my mum no longer has a job, as we apparently can’t afford it. This is why Skype is my only possible form of communication. It’s very practical. And the only reason for this is not that it’s free, but mainly because you can just shake your head, nod, grimace, sigh, roll your eyes, in short, you don’t have to waste words. Of course, it can betray you as well. If dad talked to his boss Victor on Skype, the latter would see his face and his grinding teeth and he would know that dad doesn’t really mean all the nice words.

“No, I don’t like school, but I don’t like being at home either,” I said. Of course, I didn’t really mean this. I just wanted to lead the conversation in such a direction that she would ask me what was wrong at home ... That’s why I said I didn’t like school, even though I like it very much. Which is probably also rather worrying, if a boy of my age prefers being in school to being at home.

“Where would you go, if not to school?” asked Tina and it became clear that our conversation was veering into a totally different direction.

“I don’t know,” I said with a shrug. There was a pile of cartoon strips on my desk. “Gotham City.”

“Where’s that?”

“Batman’s city.” I began to talk rubbish. “Batman keeps it in order.”

“I’d go to California. Or Florida.”

“If I were eighteen, I’d be Batman,” I said.

“Why eighteen?” she asked, surprised.

I shrugged again. I found myself pretty silly. “I don’t know,” I said. And I really didn’t know.

“And why do you want to be Batman?”

This time I didn’t shrug and I replied straight away: “Because he’s good. And strong. And he isn’t fat. And his hair doesn’t have a parting. And because he copes with even the most awkward situations ...”

“I’d like to be Britney Spears,” she said, interrupting me as if my problems didn’t interest her at all.

“Silly cow!”

Tina’s freckled face lengthened. Now it resembled a pear. She came closer to the camera. Her lower jaw dropped out of the shot. Yes, she really did look like a pear. “Me?” she asked angrily.

“No, no, no ...” I began apologising. “Not you. You’re not a silly cow, not you ... I meant Britney ... She is ... Not you, you’re much more than a silly cow ...”

She looked at me even more strangely.

“Yeah, more, much more ...” I tried to spin something while thinking in panic how to get out of this one.

“More than a silly cow is what exactly ...?”

I shrugged dumbly again. I felt like beating myself up. So I changed the subject. “Do you think Britney has plastic tits, too?”

Tina now looked at me as if a vampire had visited her and attached itself to her throat. Her face showed something between horror and a need to throw up.

“Gregory, you’re such a sicko,” she hissed. Then she remembered: “And psycho! Both. I’ve got to go.”

And she went offline.

I slapped myself a couple of times. From left and right. As punishment for being such a stupid moron.

I turned off the computer.

Then I went to the kitchen.

Maybe I really am both, a sicko and a psycho. And a nerd. And a creep.

It was getting dark. Dad had turned on the living room light and was reading his newspaper. The television was switched on. As always. Even though he wasn't watching it.

I looked into the kitchen.

It was in darkness.

And mum was sitting there motionless, staring out of the window.

[...]

2.

MY MUM HAS BEEN KIDNAPPED

Everything was smashed.

As I unlocked the door, I stepped into the hall and, like always, shouted: "Mum, I'm home!" Everything was as it usually is. Only the shoes and slippers in the hall were not quite as tidy as usual. But not really messy. It seemed a bit strange.

When I walked into the kitchen...

Everything was smashed. Fragments of plates on the floor. And of coffee cups. The cupboard over the cooker was open. Someone had thrown everything on the floor. I got scared. *Burglars! I thought. A terrorist attack!*

"Mum!" I called. No one replied. Then I rushed to the living room. It looked normal, only the door to the bedroom was wide open. And in the bedroom, there was bedlam. The wardrobe doors were open. Mum's clothes were on the floor. The wardrobes were empty. I was convinced that it must have been burglars. I became afraid. *What if they're still in the flat?* I thought. I slowly began moving back towards the living room.

"Hello, how are you?" I said very nicely. I was afraid but I also felt silly. In my own home I said *hello, how are you*, as if I was visiting. I stood in the middle of the living room for a while and then I looked into my room. Everything was okay there. I carefully opened the door to the bathroom. There, too, everything was in order. Well, nearly in order. I could see that the shelf above the sink, where mum kept her lipsticks, was empty. *They stole mum's clothes and lipsticks!*

What shall I do? What should my next move be? I wondered, trying to stay as calm as I could. *The main thing is to keep calm!* That's what it says in all the instructions for critical situations. And what I was experiencing since coming home was undoubtedly a crisis. *Keep calm, Gregory, keep calm*, I kept repeating to myself

So, *what do I know?* I wondered.

I know that the burglars, kidnappers or terrorists are no longer in the flat.

That's good news, I thought, nodding.

I also know that the burglars, kidnappers or terrorists did not break into the flat as I had to unlock the door.

This seemed strange. Burglars usually break in. Kidnappers do, too. Terrorists blow the door up. But the door to our flat had been locked, as usual. Which means that they had a key and when they left, they locked up. Interesting. Such polite, nicely brought-up burglars, kidnappers or terrorists. *But why then didn't they tidy up behind themselves, why did they leave such a mess?* I wondered. *And only mum's things are gone. And the plates in the kitchen are broken.* I didn't know how to interpret all this. So much conflicting information! *Best to Google it!* I decided.

I put in: *how to recognise a burglary.* 37,458 hits. Burglary. I even found photographs. Then I typed in *kidnapping* because it increasingly seemed to me that it must be a kidnapping and that it was all connected with the mafia. And that loan my dad had been given. *If the money isn't returned together with the interest it could end very badly ...* That's what he said ... *It could end very badly ...* It struck me: *it has ended badly and now mum has been kidnapped.* I became seriously worried about my parents.

Skype.

Tina was calling.

"Hi ..." I said when I saw her face on the screen, and then I began babbling: "Guess what's happened! It was terrible, first Jake ... but then Matthew scared him ..."

"Matthew?"

"Yes, he's sucking up ..."

"Sucking up?"

"Matthew. And he scared Jo and Pete and Jake, and Mark was a real hero, but that isn't important ..."

"Isn't important?"

"The plates are on the floor in pieces and the lipsticks are gone and the clothes ..." I tried to tell her all at once.

"Hang on, hang on ..." said Tina.

"But it was locked and they weren't in the flat, they must have locked the door when they left, can you imagine, burglars, thieves, mafia locking the door after them but not tidying up, it's all very strange, Tina, what shall I do, help me ..." I said and only just managed not to cry. I couldn't cry in front of Tina! That would really suck. As if there hadn't been enough catastrophes for one day already. If I cried she would definitely never want to talk to me again. Not even on Skype.

"If I understand correctly, you've been burgled?" asked Tina.

“Yes, I don’t know, no, maybe, I’m sure, it’s messed up, the plates are broken, mum’s lipsticks and clothes gone ...”

“You’ve been robbed?” said Tina almost with enthusiasm. “How ...” she said and then stopped. She was going to say *How exciting* but she changed her mind, it seemed inappropriate.

“I don’t know, I really don’t know, I just don’t know ...” I kept going on, it was obviously the phrase of the day. “What shall I do? What shall I do? What shall I do?”

“Have you Googled it?” asked Tina.

“I have.”

“And?”

“Lots of hits, very confusing, I don’t know what to do.”

“Google must have an answer. It always does.”

“It says that *when you suspect a burglary, you must call the police.*”

“Well, then call them. Now!” Tina said.

Another thing immediately became crystal clear. And I must remember this: girls are capable of deciding much more quickly.

“Yes, yes,” I said. “I’ll call the police.”

“Then Skype me. I’m very curious. It’s all so ...” she stopped again. She was going to say *so interesting*, but changed her mind.

“Tina,” I said.

“Yes?”

I’d been meaning to ask her ... I wasn’t sure it was the right moment ... “Tina ... Why don’t you want to talk to me at school when we get on so well on Skype?”

She gave me a surprised look. Then she blew at a curl of her hair that was tickling her forehead. She didn’t answer. She just said: “Skype me when the police have gone.” And she disconnected.

Boys always say something really important at the wrong moment. I must remember this.

[...]

3.

DIARY ATTEMPT NO 4

So I don't forget!

Something ... something really awful has happened. I've never seen a film where something quite as awful happens as what happened to me in that clearing. Why did dad bring me here? Why didn't I refuse to go? Why do I always let them do what they want with me? Just because they're grown-ups? And because I'm a child? Why did I take the bike? Why was I so enthusiastic about the colours and the giant's cooking ...? I've no idea how I'll get through all this. I'll probably become a sicko and a psycho. Or something worse. I feel as if all the shelves in a supermarket had toppled onto of me, all the tins of beans, all the packets of spaghetti, all the washing powders ... And people watched and laughed at me. What will Tina say? How will I tell Mark? What I'd like most is to disappear. To go to sleep and not wake up for a hundred years or so. I'd wake up when everyone was dead and I'd be alone in the world. Why do things like this happen? Why do they happen to me? Why?!

[...]

ALMOST LIKE IN A FILM

“I’m your dad.”

At first I thought I had misheard. Then Max said it once more: “I’m your dad.”

He’s having me on. He’s joking. He’ll start laughing any moment now.

“Your mum wrote to me a few days ago that Brad would bring you here ... After thirteen years, this was the first time she wrote. Brad doesn’t know she wrote. She just told him to bring you here.”

“He’s my dad,” I said stubbornly.

The white-haired giant nodded. “I understand you’re upset ... Before you were born, Mary and I realised we shouldn’t be together. It’s not enough for only one person in a relationship to love.”

“Mum didn’t love you!” I shouted. I was angry. I don’t know why, but I was terribly angry. If Jake appeared at that moment, I’d jump on him and beat him like a dog. “She was right not loving you.”

The white-haired giant hugged me even closer, as if trying to comfort me. I pushed him away. “Leave me alone! Liar! Why are you saying all this?”

“Because it’s only right that you should know. They should have told you earlier. I told Mary to tell you. I told Brad, too. When Mary and I broke up, she was pregnant. Then she met him and they fell in love. They moved in together. They loved each other.”

“A slut!” I shouted. “My mum is a slut!”

The white-haired giant grabbed my hand: “Don’t! You must never say that! She’s your mother. They loved each other. That’s all. They fell in love. I’ve never seen two people love each other as much. And then you were born and they thought it would be better if you didn’t know. You were my son, but the love was theirs. In the end I agreed that they would tell you when the right time came. But when is the right time?” The giant let go of my hand. He looked into my eyes: “We were wrong. It was wrong. I don’t know why we thought what we thought. I’m sorry.”

“I don’t care! I don’t want to listen to your rubbish!” I put my hands over my ears. “It’s got nothing to do with me. Leave me alone! I’m going home!”

The giant took my hands again: "I've waited for you all these years. I had a room ready for you because I knew you'd find out one day ... and come ... When your mum wrote to me, I bought the bike."

I pushed him away as hard as I could. He nearly fell off the tree stump. I didn't know I had that kind of strength in me. Suddenly it was clear to me what the word *traitor* meant. Without the internet, without Google I now knew exactly what treason meant. They had betrayed me. All of them! Dad, mum, Max ... "Damn you ..." I shouted, "damn traitors! I hate you!" and I ran across the clearing.

"Gregory, wait!" I heard him shout after me.

I didn't stop. I ran into the woods. I wasn't thinking anything. I just wanted to get away from there. Away. When I reached the bikes, I grabbed mine and got on. I pedalled as hard as I could. I barely managed to avoid the trees. I didn't care if I hit one or if I fell. My world had shattered into pieces, I didn't know anything anymore, who I was or whose I was and so I didn't care about anything else either. I went over rocks, across ditches, rode down slopes and up slopes and then back down again over stones ... Branches were hitting my arms, my legs, my face, but I just kept pedalling. I rode on the back wheel, then on both wheels again, flew over tree trunks, jumped over a stream and then at one moment I was flying ... I was flying in the air. I didn't touch the ground at all. I was flying like in *E.T.*, among the tree tops, higher and higher. The pine trees were now beneath me and I was flying away from everyone, toward the sky, the moon! In the middle of the day!

I fell into some bushes.

The bike flew far ahead.

My face hurt as I scraped it along the ground.

Then I don't remember anything else.

Max carried me to the purple house.

I remember the concerned grunting of Catharine the Great, who leaned over me and said: *You poor thing, what happened? I've said a thousand times that too much exercise isn't good for one's health. But no one listens to me. Oh dear, oh dear!* Max was right, Catherine the Great had spoken.

Max wiped the soil off my face. Then he put something on it that stung. But I didn't care. He carried me to bed. I feel asleep. At least that's what I think. The whole thing was like a dream. Almost like in a film.