

## Martin Muser: Vol.1, CAN'T BE TRUE – SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO DUCK OUT

**Kannawoniwasein! Manchmal muss man einfach verduften**

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### ENGLISH SAMPLE TRANSLATION

#### Chapter 3 – The Cop's Crash

And then everything happens very fast. Finn quietly opens the door, slips out of the police car, ducks down and sneaks off behind the girl, who's strolling away. They're already several meters from the accident site when suddenly the pudgy one's voice screeches:

"Hey, you two! Where do you think you're goin'?" As if following orders, Finn and the girl take off like a shot. The girl's really fast; Finn runs for all he's worth to keep up. Their shoes slap the asphalt, their hair flies.

"Stop!" The tall policewoman's voice chimes in. The girl sprints ahead. They run along a row of houses. Finn's throat starts burning. The girl makes a loop and runs into a driveway. Finn follows her into a dark back courtyard. It's closed in by a wall. Too high to climb over. Out of breath, Finn looks at the girl: oh, great! Now what?! Behind them they hear the rapid steps of the police. The girl points to a big dumpster and opens the lid:

"In here!"

Finn makes a face: "In the garbage?!"

"You got a better idea?!"

The girl climbs into the dumpster. With no other option, Finn follows her.

She quickly shuts the lid over them.

"Eww!" says Finn, pinching his nose shut.

"Shh! the girl hisses, peering through the narrow slit under the lid.

Finn sees the police coming into the courtyard.

"If they're in here, we've got 'em trapped," squeaks the pudgy one, panting. He and the tall one are walking around the whole yard, searching everything.

Oh, please, please, thinks Finn, don't look in the garbage! At that exact moment, the tall one points to the dumpster.

"Maybe in there?"

The police start walking toward the dumpster. Finn and the girl give each other a desperate look: now what?!

There's no other choice: they have to dive. Into the garbage. Among plastic bags, old coffee filters, slimy lettuce leaves, a can of dried paint, empty toothpaste tubes, squishy tomatoes, broken egg shells, a pair of old sneakers... Right into the middle. As deep as they can. Finn, scrambling to pull a burst garbage bag over himself, feels his hand reaching into something soft. And already, the lid is swinging up and the pudgy one's face pokes into the opening.

Finn holds his breath, doesn't move a muscle.

"Ugghh! Does that ever stink! the pudgy one yelps, quickly slamming the lid back down. "Nah, nothin' in there."

"Well, this is a fine mess," the tall one says, as her voice fades into the distance. "If we don't find 'em, we're in for it. And how."

"It's a prank, I'm tellin' ya!" says the pudgy one, his voice also growing more distant.

"It's not a phase! Totally bizarre, that's what it is!"

Finn and the girl wait for another couple of minutes. Not until it's absolutely silent and they're sure the police are gone do they come up from the garbage and clamber out of the dumpster. The girl pulls a dark-brown banana peel out of her frizzy hair.

Now Finn sees the soft thing he stuck his hand into. Gross! Dangling from his arm is a used diaper, its Velcro tape caught on his jacket! Frantically, Finn tries to shake it

off, but the diaper's stuck tight. The girl takes it off and, laughing, tosses it back into the dumpster:

"Elastico fantastico! We're home free!"

She's referring to the cops, of course. She wipes her hand on her jeans and reaches it out to Finn.

"My name's Yola, by the way."

Finn takes Yola's hand and shakes it.

"Mine's Finn."

Yola grips the wheel and clears the gatepost by a hair's breadth as she steers the tractor out of the yard. Swaying from side to side, it rumbles over the concrete slabs in front of the sheds and reaches the field road, where Yola has to crank the wheel hard to make the curve.

"See how easy it is?" she shouts over the noise of the engine.

Finn nods. He's found the light switch. The tractor's headlights flood the ruts of the dirt road in yellow light.

"And now – full speed ahead!" yells Yola.

She floors the accelerator and the engine starts knocking like it's going to blow apart any second.

"Second gear!" yells Finn.

Yola lets up on the gas and steps on the clutch. Finn operates the gear shift and moves it into second. Then third, then fourth. Their clutch-shift coordination gets better and better, and soon the tractor is chugging along smoothly through the night.

"You can have a turn at the wheel, too," shouts Yola. "I'll show you how it works."

Finn nods and thinks to himself that he already knows how it works.

After a while, the field road turns into a paved road, and a little later, the headlights illuminate a big yellow sign on the side of the road. "Berlin 55 km". Finn and Yola exchange gleeful looks. They're on the right road. They're DRIVING to Berlin!

Then Finn takes the wheel and steers the tractor. It really isn't difficult, and he quickly gets the hang of turning the wheel just so in order to make the curves. Yola, sitting next to him, looks at the speedometer with satisfaction.

"25 kay-emm-aitch. No prob," she says knowledgeably.

Finn calculates: 25 kilometers an hour... – if they can keep that speed up, they'll be home in two hours. Finn can hardly wait to see the looks on Mama's and Mukhtar's faces when they see him and Yola on the tractor. They'll be so amazed. And once you've got luck on your side, sometimes it can read your mind. Because now, over the trees in front of them, an especially bright star appears in the night sky. And it's neither the north star nor a satellite, that much is certain: this star has the shape of a hamburger and a corona of yellow-gold French fries. The glowing neon sign floats on the tip of a long pole over a fast-food restaurant, so that hungry travelers like Finn and Yola can see it from a long way away.

"Hooray!" shouts Finn. "Something to eat!" He steers the tractor straight in its direction. Yola takes the two crumpled bills out of her jeans pocket and smooths them flat.

"15 euros. More than enough for two meal deals!"

Finn nods: "Main thing, they have vegetarian, too."

"Don't you like meat?" Yola asks, surprised.

"Sure I do," says Finn. "But I don't eat it anymore. Because I don't want animals to die."

"But they're going to die anyway...sometime."

"Yes, but because they're old. And not because they're butchered."

"Some die because they're eaten by other animals," says Yola, "crocodiles or lions or sharks..."

Finn nods. "Then at least they won't die because of me. Besides, you can make hotdogs and burgers without meat."

"Yes, but they don't taste as good," says Yola.

"The ones my dad makes do. He even sells them to a wellness hotel."

"So is your dad some kind of butcher?" Yola asks.

"Well," says Finn. "Actually, he's a programmer. For computers and stuff. But then it started to drive him crazy and he didn't want anything more to do with computers. So he started making tofu things. Burgers, hotdogs, schnitzels...and now he makes good money at it."

Yola laughs. "A vegetarian tofu-hotdog-programmer, that's pretty funny."

When they reach the entrance to the restaurant, Yola points to an arrow sign. It says: Drive-thru. Finn has English in school, but this word has never come up in lessons. Yola knows what it means.

"A 'drive-thru' is a restaurant that you can just drive up to," she says. "You stay in your car and get your food to go."

"Oh, I see," says Finn. "Like coffee-to-go." Mama gets that sometimes to wake up when she takes him to school. Mukhtar always kids her and asks if the coffee-to-go really comes from Togo. That's a country in Africa. He says that actually, there should also be coffee-Cameroon and coffee-Ethiopia. Mama rolls her eyes and says that no matter what it looks like, it's pronounced "too"-go, not "toe"-go.

Finn follows the arrow and steers the tractor around the back of the flat-topped building. Stuck onto the bare brick wall is a little hut with an open window. Behind the window sits a giantess. At least that's what it looks like, because she fills up practically the entire hut. Above her head, there's just enough space for a little green cap set at an angle on her wavy hair, like a canoe on the high seas. When the woman sees Finn and Yola on the tractor, she signals them to drive ahead.

Finn lets up on the gas, steps on the brake and tromps on the clutch. The tractor stops – but two meters past the window, and the giantess' puzzled face looks out at them. Finn jiggles the gear shift.: "Crap, where's reverse on this thing?"

Yola pushes the stick into a new position. Finn works the clutch, the tractor rolls back and stops again – this time two meters short of the window.

Yola leans forward to the giantess and shouts, competing with the engine's noise:

"We'd like something for 15 euros! Some of it vegetarian! And everything to go!"

Finn nudges the accelerator. The tractor jumps ahead a bit and finally lands directly in front of the window. The giantess shakes her massive head so vigorously that the little tube-like microphone in front of her mouth wobbles.

"First learn to drive, then order!" comes her jarring voice from the loudspeaker through the window, and it sounds like it's coming out of a watering can. She leans forward. "I must be seeing things." She gawks at Finn and blinks her eyes in disbelief. "Who gave you permission to drive that thing? You're still wet behind the ears!"

Yola puts a serious expression on her face and reads the name displayed on the monitor behind the window. It says: Your server today is Frau Hopp.

"Hey, listen, Frau Hopp," says Yola. "I'm afraid we haven't got time to chit-chat. Because we still have to get to the city today."

"The city?!" The giantess points to the tractor. "On that? To Berlin?!"

Yola nods and makes that hand gesture grown-ups always make when they want to say something especially important. "That's correct, my good woman. Now, can we order something or not?"

Finn suspects that the term "my good woman" is a little old-fashioned. But Yola is completely in her element and holds the two bills out to the giantess. "Of course we'll pay full price, and in cash."

But instead of taking the money, the giantess just shakes her cap, presses a button, and says a nasal "two kids" into the little tube in front of her mouth. Then she releases the button, and again her voice comes jangling out of the loudspeaker: "Now look here, you two little jokers. I'll give you the kids' meals for free. 'Cuz I'm havin' a good day. But then you get down from that contraption right now. And I'm callin' your mother. So she can pick you up here pronto. Got that?"

She takes the two brown paper bags that have magically appeared in the hatch behind her and holds them out the window.

Yola takes the bags and smiles regretfully. "Thanks, that's so nice of you. But we have to get moving. Good-bye, my good woman!"

Yola gives Finn a signal. Finn eases up on the clutch. The tractor starts moving. Frau Hopp leans way out the window and waves her arms around wildly. So wildly that the cap sails off her head.

"Hey! You little monkeys! I told you to get off!"

Finn floors it, the exhaust pipe spews a cloud of black smoke into the air, and the tractor starts picking up speed.

Yola turns around and waves good-bye:

"Careful, Frau Hopp! You might blow your top!"

Finn has to laugh.

A snorted "snot-nosed brats!" is the last they hear from the giantess as she and her little house grow smaller and smaller until finally, they're out of sight.

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