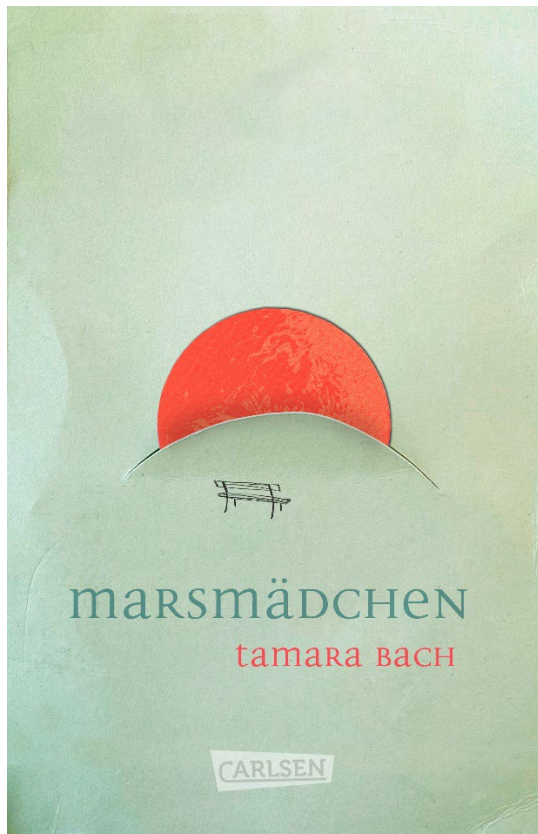


Tamara Bach: Girl from Mars

Marsmädchen

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ENGLISH SAMPLE TRANSLATION

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"This small town hasn't got room for my big feelings"

Björk, Violently Happy

for Mams

GIRL FROM MARS

Marsmädchen

978-3-551-31886-2, July 2023

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first: is there anybody out there?

1.

Name

Address

Birthday

Place of birth

Height

Weight

Hobbies

Favourite drink

Favourite food

Favourite film

Favourite song

Favourite star

Friends

What I like

What I don't like

A wish for you

Name

My name is Miriam.

Age, birthday, place

I am 15 years old. Fifteen.

Address

The town where I live is pretty and small, in summer tourists come to see the church and the old castle and to walk through the old streets. In summer it's beautiful here. You can sit in a field, look into the valley and share a bottle of

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wine with someone, maybe it will be evening. You can go to the quarry pond when it's daytime or break into the swimming pool when it's night. You don't have to do much at all in the summer to do something. In summer it's enough to just be there. No matter where.

In winter the town is too small and it freezes. The town is nowhere, no one knows it, in winter, people forget that there is a church and a castle and ancient alleys exist, and the people who live here suddenly forget themselves too. And hide. I'm not a winter person. I'm Miriam. 15. Blonde. Brown eyes. 1,62 m, 59 kg or not. Child, sister, pupil, bank neighbour.

I am Miriam. I am tired. And that was it.

That is me. Nothing more, nothing less. Simply nothing more.

What do I like and what do I dislike?

Favourite..., favourite...

I am not sporty. I'm lazy, says mum. I'm not stupid, says the maths teacher.

Sometimes I am like that. And sometimes I am different.

I stare at the book. After the summer they put us in a new class. New, with new people, because the class has become too small. A fortnight ago, one of the new class gave me this book. And yesterday she got angry because I hadn't given it back to her yet, "Tomorrow", I said.

Profile. This means that you should describe yourself as precisely as possible. describe myself. Why does she want me to describe myself so precisely, what does she want from me?

I turn the page. The book is already half full. It's not one you can buy in the stationery shops. No, here everyone writes what they want, but most of them stick to favourite-whatever-lists. Some stuck a nice photo of themselves in it. There, like Bille. She doesn't really look like that. Fredi has painted all over the page with some kind of lettering that is supposed to look like a graffiti. Fredi has never even touched a spray can.

Bambambam, my pen drums on the book. Today she needs it back.

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A wish for you.

I wish for you to...

What I wish for.

I would like to know what to write.

Imagine a girl. One with talent, one who shines, who people look out for. To whom you say hello and smile. And who likes to smile herself. And then imagine one that nobody likes because maybe she stinks or has a funny laugh. I'm in between. I'm a bit pretty, maybe. Yes, says Mama, says old Pit in the booth. Maybe I'm a bit ugly, says Alex from the tenth grade, says Dennis, but he doesn't matter.

I'm quite clever, my grades in maths and French say.

But history and chemistry say I'm the worst idiot.

What are you if you are always in the middle of it, not him and not her, not meat nor fish? You are boring then. What should I write?

Friends

Ines is sitting under the sink doing maths. Suse is sitting on the toilet, lighting her third cigarette. Suse is talking about her new boyfriend. She met him a few days ago. And now they are together. His name is Martin. Martin is really cute. He has a great figure. He's eighteen and drives a VW Golf, a red one with a good stereo. "He's picking me up later." I imagine Martin. He has no face because he wears a baseball cap. He has pulled it deep into his forehead.

He's wearing some kind of jumper, maybe beige or white with writing on it. And some kind of trousers. His VW Golf is in the background. Martin pulls Suse towards him, she lets him, he's taller than her, Martin kisses her and the baseball cap pushes in front of her face and she spreads one leg. Suse. Not the cap.

Then Martin takes Suse's hand and leads her to the car. Suse gets in. The school is reflected in the windows.

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Then they drive away. You can hardly see Suse. The car drives off into the sunset. Maybe they are going to the sea. Maybe they are going to the mountains. Maybe he has his own flat.

"What are you doing?" asks Ines.

So I show her the book and she's like, "Uh-huh." Pulls a face. "By whom?"

"Carola."

"So Carola has friends," Suse laughs.

"And apparently Miriam fits in quite well, in the delicious circle of friends of the lovely Carola." Then Ines sticks a finger down her throat.

"So you don't find Carola so ...?" I ask.

"Not really." Ines bends over her maths book again. Friends, then. When our class was separated, Ines and Suse came to the new class with me. We belonged together somehow. Or something. So we're friends.

Sitting here together in the small but largest cubicle in the girls' bathroom.

Outside it is winter and cold.

Every toilet in the school toilet is the same, every morning I see the same "For the world you are somebody, but for somebody you are the world". I've been at this school for five years and the saying has probably been around for longer. I hate that saying. Every morning is the same, whether it's Monday or Thursday. Five days a week are the same because they are school days and they don't make any difference. Every morning Suse and Ines sit in the biggest cubicle, the wheelchair-accessible restrooms. Suse always sits on the toilet and Ines under the sink, and we always sit here because it's cold and boring outside, and we wait and smoke and wait for something to happen.

7.23 h: Do you have maths?

7.30 h: I am tired.

7.35 h: Tell these stupid fucking kids to fuck off.

7.45 h (first ring): I'll have another smoke and then join you.

That's how it all is. That is friendship.

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Bambambam. Suse snatches the book out of my hand.

"What's taking you so long?"

Suse flips through the book and laughs in some places. Then she takes a drag on her cigarette and continues to leaf through. "You'd like that!" she laughs.

Ines looks up. "What?"

"Kai writes here that he's the big pike. He's in urgent need of that."

"Give it back!"

Suse hesitates a little, but then gives it back. I flip back to my page. The doorbell rings. Ines curses.

"I'll have another smoke," says Suse. I get up. I stand in front of the sink and look at myself, and in the corner Ines and Suse. But in the middle, me. I stand there and look in the mirror above the washbasin. That's me. Blonde, brown eyes, medium height, medium weight, the same every day.

It's winter and I'm the same every day.

2.

If a fairy came and you had three wishes, what would you wish for?

World peace and a cure for cancer and AIDS. And that the world becomes whole again.

No, for real now.

Two thousand new wishes. Then an alarm signal that tells me when wish 1999 is reached so that I can wish for that many again.

Oh, I'm quite satisfied.

Bend over, fairy, a wish is a wish.

Haha.

If I could wish for something, all to myself, and no one judges it and says afterwards: "How?! That's what you wished for?", then I would...

There's someone in the twelfth grade. I want to be like that. She's just beautiful.

She is tall and has beautiful eyes and hair and hands and belly and breasts.

and ...

I don't know, she's just beautiful. Not just because she was born that way or anything. No. Look at her. She's standing there, it's normal for her, but no one at this school, no, no one I've ever met can stand so beautifully. And then maybe take a step forward. And when she talks, she raises her hand and talks with her hand. You, that looks beautiful.

And her voice is beautiful. Quite dark. She speaks clearly and probably always knows what to say. The woman from the twelfth is also in a band, I saw her at a concert once. And she sings incredibly.

I would like to be like that. Like this. Beautiful. But not because I have the right clothes on. Or make-up. But simply because I am beautiful.

And then I would also like to be very smart. I would like to speak more languages and know more about politics. Like Florian. He knows everything about politics.

But I don't think he only watches the news, he also reads five different

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newspapers and magazines and I'm sure he also reads, oh, I don't know. And I'd like to know history too. I don't care about chemistry. And then, I'd also like to be talented. The girl in class twelve can sing. One in my class paints and draws beautifully. Jane from my old class plays the piano. And does ballet.

If I had all that. Oh man. When you're like that, you really have it good.

That is selfish and superficial.

So: world peace. An end to hunger and misery. An intact environment or something.

"This is where the music plays!"

How?

I looked out of the window and the teacher doesn't like that.

"Miriam dreams too much, Mrs Sander."

"Oh, it was already in her first report card, you're not the first."

Haha.

If you have three wishes, it means that someone wants you to be happy. The fairy godmother, easily. And the fairy won't look at me askance and say: "Well, Miriam, those are some pretty bold wishes, think about the starving children, they don't have it as good as you, or about the melting polar ice caps, but if you'd rather play the piano, well, who needs Hamburg!"

"Miriam!"

"Yes?"

"Pay attention!"

"Yes."

"Don't look outside all the time or I'll lower the blinds!" Well, now he's getting silly.

"Okay."

Don't look out. So look at the blackboard. I've already copied it down. Listen. But it's boring.

We have only been in this class for three months. Almost everyone here knows each other. But I have nothing to do with most of them. The girls in the class are afraid of Suse and Ines. They're a bit different too. The girls here. Wearing jumpers with horses on them. And feed the horse at the end of the week. Carola doesn't know that that was the wrong thing to say.

Suse: "Well, Carola, what did you do last weekend?"

Carola: "I was with my horse."

Suse: "Well, well."

And then Suse raised her eyebrows and grinned very broadly. Carola smiled back. But Carola hasn't known Suse since the fifth grade. So she couldn't have known that she was playing herself out of the game for good.

Carola is sitting over there, with a few more girls. Suse calls the row "the horse cunts". In front of us is a row of boys who were in the same class as us in fifth grade, but then chose Latin. But they are still the same as in fifth grade.

Someone in the front row looks at me. Laura. She's repeating the ninth grade, so she's also new to the class. Laura is sitting in the front row on one of those nerdy seats where you can see everything, she's lying on her pad. She holds a pen in her hand and looks at me. And then she looks away again.

Let her.

Mario is sitting next to her. I see Mario signalling to the boys behind Laura's back, making faces, showing off, ha, I'm going to get her laid too, naturally. Mario is a wanker. A show-off. The boys think Mario is horny. Supermario, like the one in the game. Leader of a group of idiots, and that includes every single boy in our class.

What am I doing here?

The one from the 12th. I don't know her name. But she's probably sitting in a class right now and not in her class, or maybe she's off duty and sitting in the café around the corner. Maybe she just called in and said something pretty smart. Something she saw in a report the other day. Or she read this article about the

women in Afghanistan and reports about the conditions there. Maybe she talks to her friends about important things. What do you think?

Suse talks about her boyfriend. Ines too. We talk about school and the people there. And about the parents.

Music sometimes, "I bought a new CD", no, rather rarely.

I don't know. We just talk.

Maybe I would like to be a little older. Fifteen is a strange age. Fifteen is so ... nothing. Even so in the middle. Let's look at the clock.

"Miriam, is this too boring for you?"

He's got it in for me today too!

"Nah. Sorry."

"Give me a few more minutes, okay?"

"Sure."

What time was it now? Great.

Ines writes a letter to her boyfriend. His name is Florian. Flo. They have been together for almost five months now. They sleep together when they can. But Ines' parents don't like Flo. I don't think they really mind Flo, but they do mind Ines having a boyfriend she sleeps with. "Having sex," she says.

I imagine Ines pulling the door shut behind her. And how Flo then takes off her clothes. No music, because otherwise they can't hear the front door. I imagine a nosy little sister crying when the door is locked, shouting loudly, "What are you doing in there?" I imagine Ines' bed, narrow it is, maybe it squeaks, and they do it on the floor or standing up against the wall.

I would like to look at the clock now, but the one in the front fixes me and I have to pretend that I am really still listening. When he looks away, I see that it's still 17 minutes. Amazing. I glance around the class.

Carola and the others are writing along. Felix in the last row is tinkering with something. Mario looks over at the idiots from time to time and makes some kind of "fuckingfucking" gesture. Very cool. Laura is still lying on her writing pad and

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fixes the Schroeder. And then she turns slightly to the side and draws on her pad.

I can see from here that she's not taking notes, but drawing or scribbling something. But I can't see what. Schroeder should comment on that. Then she looks up. Not really up, she just raises her eyes and looks directly at me, but continues to draw.

She has green eyes, like a witch. It's funny. I can't look away and she just looks at me, just like that, doesn't want anything, just looks.

Maybe I should smile or something. Maybe. Then Schroeder stands in front of me. "Miriam."

"Mr Schroeder?"

"Good that you at least remember my name. So, write down, homework for Thursday."

And then I quickly get out my calendar and write down, page 45, no. 5 fully, no. 6 b-f, read text no. 3.

3.

When you live in a big city, life is different. Different from here. Here, in the small town, every day is the same. I get up and I'm not awake, eat and I don't know if I'm hungry. Drink and my mouth stays dry. It is winter and I am still asleep. Every day is the same.

It must be different in a city. I was once in Berlin and visited a pen pal. We took the underground a lot and always got off somewhere else, and it always looked different. "Smell this," I said to her, "how this smells." It was in the underground station, and pig outlines were painted on the walls. "What do you think?" she asked.

"Well, it smells here." "It smells like shit here, I know," she said. And once she showed me photos of her holidays on the horse farm.

"In the middle of the countryside," she said.

It smelled like the city in the underground, a bit like rubber and dust and neon. It was a smell you could really touch. It jumped in your face and then straight into your nose. Everything here smells so, soo, sooo ... I don't know. Sometimes a bit like earth and like rain or like manure. But if you don't want to smell that, then you don't smell that.

It is afternoon. Afternoons are the same. Coming home from school. Eat. Clearing the table, washing up. Go upstairs, radio on. Sit at desk. Do homework. Go back downstairs. Make a pot of tea. Look out the window, nothing happens, keep looking anyway until the water boils and I pour the tea. Maybe someone calls and then I talk a little and listen.

It would be different in the city. You can just sit in the underground and look at the people. There are people who don't stay at home, who don't hide in their little houses with chimneys. You can just walk around, get off, get on, look. And it's always a little different again. I wonder if I would be different too.

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I imagine myself in the city. I would have a ticket for the train and wouldn't have to use my bike. I would have friends who live in old houses. With balconies. I wouldn't need a city map. I would be out and about all day, seeing people and doing things. Interesting things, different things, things I've never done before. I am sitting at my desk in the small town and have finished number five. It's half past three. I'm going to bed sometime in a few hours.

Shit, I'm bored.

No one at home. The house is quiet. Sometimes it's like that, you know how it is, it's quiet and inside you're screaming, all of a sudden, really loud, and you just want to scream or kick or spit and flick-flack or something? Sometimes I'm much bigger on the inside and I don't fit in here.

I turn on music. I turn it up loud. I dance a little. And then I sit down in the armchair by the window and look out. Then I lie down on the bed. I turn the music down and then completely off.

I lie on my bed and listen into the house. It is an old house, the wood is cracking, it is working. The tree in the garden is stretching its branches towards my window, scratching at the pane, maybe it's cold and wants me to let it in, like a cat. At some point I hear my mother unlocking the door and saying "I'm calls out "at home" without waiting for an answer. Someone switches on the television. Dad has a late shift. Dennis is talking on the phone in the hallway, his voice gets quieter, then he goes downstairs.

Sometimes you only hear a steady hum like neon lights or the refrigerator. It's never really quiet. But nothing ever really happens either. I think of a city and nothing. Then I turn on the music and turn it up loud. Damn loud.

In the evening, the house becomes quieter. I stand at the sink with my mother and dry a pot. Mum is only beautiful sometimes. She has a loud laugh and is not slim, she dyes her hair red since it is turning grey. I don't think we look alike. Mum sways slightly to the music the radio is playing. Everyone says we are alike. Once, when I was small, we were approached by a stranger:

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"Well, you can see that you belong together, mother and daughter." She takes the pot out of my hand and puts it in the cupboard, then she grabs a cloth and wipes the countertop. Hums.

"How was school?"

"Good."

"Anything happening?"

"Nope."

"Have you called Aunt Helene yet and thanked her for her card?"

Shit. "No."

"Why don't you give her a call? Otherwise she'll be mad again. It won't take long."

"I still have homework to do."

"Now?"

Ah, look, she's frowning again, that's what she does ALWAYS!

"Yes." Read my lips!

"Just five minutes, Miriam."

Whole countries have gone under in five minutes. I wipe with the towel.

"Come on, Miriam."

"Yes."

"The phone number is in the book under D for Danz." And I'm not as stupid as I might look. I go to the phone, look up the number and dial. It's busy.

"OCCUPIED!", I shout towards the kitchen. Ha! You see!

"Well, try again later."