



by Katharina Köller
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Fiction

Sprawling Wildly

Wild wuchern

review

'Sprawling Wildly' is the tale of a city girl in an abusive relationship who reunites with her hermit cousin off-grid in the Alps for a back-to-nature lesson in life.

Marie arrives at her cousin Johanna's hut in the mountains with a head wound, saying she has escaped from her husband Peter. The cousins grew up together, and Marie has always tried to conform with familial and social expectations; Johanna, on the other hand, struggled to fit in, and now chooses to live alone in the Alps.

The cousins have an argument which results in Johanna asking Marie to leave. But instead of returning to the valley, Marie hides out nearby in the goat pen. After days of rain, Marie is cold and hungry. A helicopter flies over and she wonders if it is searching for her. When the goat knocks over the ladder to the hayloft where she is hiding, Marie hurts herself getting down and ends up back at Johanna's hut. Johanna reluctantly accepts her back, mentioning that the police were searching for Marie but that she has denied seeing her.

The two women finally start talking properly while sheltering in the hut during a storm. Johanna describes her difficult childhood: her parents had first had another child, Johannes, who died, and Johanna had always felt herself to be a disappointment, wilder and darker than their perfect son. She turned to nature, escaping into the woods at nighttime with the family dogs, until the police found her. After that

she was locked in her room overnight and the dogs were put in a kennel, but she jumped out of her first-floor window to see them, breaking her arm. To Johanna's lasting distress, her father had the dogs shot.

Marie finally divulges that the reason she came to Johanna's hut is that she has left Peter for dead after hitting him over the head with a crystal vase. She resolves to go to the police, but Johanna persuades her to stay in the mountains with her.

'Sprawling Wildly' is a diverting and highly readable novel which explores widely relevant themes of domestic abuse and the tension between our materialistic, capitalist society and the longing for a simpler, rural existence. The novel should be well-received by English-speaking readers, and would appeal to fans of Liane Moriarty and Marian Keyes.

Find out more:

<https://foreignrights.penguinrandomhouse.de/sprawling-wildly/978-3-328-60392-4>

press quotes

Big Little Lies meets Heidi in this entertaining, enigmatic reunion of two very different Austrian cousins.

Jo Heinrich

about the author



Katharina Köller was born in Austria in 1984. She studied Philosophy and Drama, and has worked as a freelance author, actor, and theatre maker since 2011. Her debut novel, *Was ich im Wasser sah* ('What I Saw in the Water') was published in 2020 and won the City of Wetzlar Fantasy Prize. Katharina Köller lives with her family in Vienna and Innsbruck.

Previous works: *Was ich im Wasser sah*,

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