

Was ich Dich träumen lasse by Franziska Moll

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Was ich Dich träumen lasse (The Things I Dream for You)

by Franziska Moll

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Day 1

He's so gorgeous. His skin is all velvety from sleep. His lips are red. His hair is tousled, framing his face as though it were a painting. His eyes are moving under their lids. They wander back and forth as though they're looking for something. Me perhaps. I'm here.

Only a few millimetres separate our naked bodies. I can feel the warmth of his skin. Right before we touch I get goosebumps. Every time. The hairs on my body graze his. A shiver runs down my spine. Only once it has died away do I cuddle up to him.

"Good morning," I whisper.

He growls, turns over. He hasn't realized yet that I'm the one disturbing his dreams.

He needs a good reason to wake up, so I wrap my arms around his body and tuck my knees into the hollow formed by his curled up legs. We're two spoons with absolutely no interest in breakfast. But it's late. Too late.

"School," I whisper. "Dornsted's waiting."

He growls again, pulls the pillow out from under his head and presses it against his ear. He's realized that it's me. From now on it's a game. Our game. The pillow over his head means I need to be more explicit.

My hand wanders over his back to a small dimple where the skin is darker. Below that there's a curve. I give it a good pinch.

"Ow! That's my arse! Are you crazy? You'll give me a bruise!" He pretends to be hurt but really he wants me to carry on.

I pinch him again, a bit higher this time. "I am crazy, crazily in love," I say.

And that's the truth. Especially at this very moment. It's always at moments like these. When he's asleep. When he thinks nobody's watching. When I'm watching him from a distance. Then everything comes together. Then everything's simple. Yes, it really is. Life's as simple as falling off a log.

He turns around. He can't resist. One hand burrows under my hips, the other one comes at me from above. He's got me. And he's got no intention of letting go.

"It's after seven thirty already," I say.

"We can forget the first class then."

"Not if we get a move on. Come on. Time to shower."

"I like you when you're dirty." He pushes up my arm and buries his nose in my armpit. "If I'm not mistaken, there's terrible stomach flu going round at the moment. Even Dornsted will believe us if we say you had it first and passed it on to me. We're ill." He pulls a terrible face as though he's actually sick.

"You can look really ugly when you want to," I say.

And do you know what his clever reply was: "I would love you even if you were ugly. If you were ugly. If you were ditzy. Even if you were dead."

"And I would love you even if you passed your final exams," I said, sliding out of his arms and down to the end of the

bed, taking the duvet with me. As I make my way to the bathroom, I glance back. The morning light looks especially beautiful on his naked body, forming hills and valleys. As though he's a painting. Maybe I should go back, just for a moment.

"Will you lie exactly that way next time?" I ask.

"Why?"

"Just say yes. Make a note of the way you're lying now and lie exactly the same way next time, OK?"

"OK!"

I don't go back. I put it off until tomorrow.

My gaze wanders to the other side of the room. He's not looking at me. He's talking to Aron, gesticulating enthusiastically, with a broad grin. I can't tell what he's talking about. Maybe he's talking about me.

He's at least seven metres away. That's too far. I definitely don't find it easier to concentrate when he's far away. That's the kind of thing only a teacher could come up with.

"So what's the plan?"

"We're going out to eat. Three courses. Candlelight. Champagne."

Susanne smiles and tries to look happy for me but doesn't quite manage. I can tell she's struggling with something. She'd like to be in a relationship too. And she's been waiting a long time for the right person.

"A whole year. That's ... a really long time," she says and looks down at her exercise book. Luckily she still needs to copy something down.

"We're an old married couple." I try to give her something to hang on to.

"What are you going to wear?"

"Something short and tight."

Now her smile is more genuine. She's not as tense. She can even look me in the eye and say, truthfully, "You're really lucky."

I shrug my shoulders.

It's on the tip of my tongue to say, You'll find somebody soon. Somebody you can make plans with. Somebody to stand by your side and help you face the world with confidence.

Somebody you want to grow old and wrinkly with.

But I say, "Are you finished?"

"Yes." She gives me back my exercise book.

Dornsted enters the classroom and looks as though he'd much rather walk straight back out again. He hates us. I'm sure he stares at the calendar every single morning and asks himself when it'll all be over. It can't be that much longer. He looks old. Like somebody who's grown old all alone.

He doesn't bother saying hello and starts to write on the board with squeaky chalk. He looks at us like something he can't ignore even though he'd really like to.

"What does this number mean, ladies and gentlemen?"

Nobody answers. So he answers himself.

"That's the number of months left before your final exams."

He waits, but nobody reacts. "Final exams," he repeats.

"Does anybody here think they can possibly pass their final exams in four months?"

Nobody says anything.

"Then for once we are of the same opinion."

He doesn't even want us to like him.

Away from the shadow cast by the school building, the day is full of sun.

"How can anyone be that grumpy?" Aron lets the muscles in his face go droopy and gives a blank stare. The similarity is incredible. He can even mimic the voice. "What you see here on my face, ladies and gentlemen, is the life lived by somebody who managed to pass their final exams. Full of wrinkles and bitterness."

"He's way past his sell-by date," Susanne says. "A teacher like that should really be suspended. They shouldn't let him loose on pupils any more."

"Does anybody know anything about him?" I ask.

"I bet you he's never ever invited a class over to his house. Somebody told me he lives by himself so he's not married. Who'd want a zombie like that?"

"I almost feel sorry for him," says Rico.

I dig him in the ribs with my elbow. "You're too nice!"

"I didn't say I *felt* sorry for him. I only said I *almost* felt sorry for him."

"Are we doing something today?" Aron wants to know.

"We're staying in," I reply.

"Couples are so boring. Couples shouldn't have friends.

Susanne, what are you up to?"

"I haven't got any plans."

Aron slips his arm through hers and pulls her away. He gives us a look designed to exterminate all couples within a three-mile radius but before he disappears, he laughs and shouts, "I love you guys, even though you are incredibly boring! Look after yourselves."

"We love you too, you idiot!" Rico shouts and turns to me.

"What's that supposed to mean, anyway? Look after yourselves. Am I supposed to look after myself? Or are you supposed to look after yourself? Or are we supposed to look after each other?"

"It's just an expression."

"Yes, but where does it come from? There must be a point to it. I mean, I can't look after myself. I can't split myself in two and let one half get on with things while the other half makes sure the first half doesn't make any mistakes."

"Let's just leave it at taking care of each another, OK?"

"OK."

I'm about to turn right on my usual way home. But Rico lets go of my hand. "I've got to go home today for a change. They'll think something's happened to me otherwise."

"Phone them."

"Seriously, Elena, my parents don't know what my voice sounds like any more."

"That's why you should phone them."

He shakes his head. "Why don't you come with me? They'd be really pleased to see you again. Last time I saw my dad he

wouldn't believe we were still going out. He thought I was just telling him stories so I had an excuse not to go home."

"Go tomorrow."

"No." He looks away. If he didn't look away, he wouldn't be able to resist. That's the way he is. He has to try really hard not to be the way he is naturally. "I'm going home now and basta! I'll see you tomorrow evening. At seven." He pushes me away to be on the safe side.

I could convince him, but I don't want to. Maybe he's right.

"It feels like a week. That's how fast the time has gone," he says.

"It feels like a decade to me," I say. "I can't remember what life was like without you any more."

"Funny, isn't it? Time's really subjective." Now he's grabbed my hand after all. And it takes forever until our fingers finally part and Rico crosses the road.

"Do you know what's for dessert tomorrow?" I shout after him.

"No, what?"

"One-Year Anniversary Elena Wearing a Nightie."

"Sounds tasty."

"It is." I stick my thumbs in the back of my jeans and push them down two or three centimetres. Just far enough to reveal the top of my bum crack. I know he'll turn round and look at me one more time. I know I can tempt him back. For a last kiss. I really need one before I can let him go.

I glance over my shoulder. He's already running, putting on a show, his arms outstretched, his tongue hanging out of his mouth like a horny goat.

We both see it at exactly the same time. For a fraction of a second he stands rooted to the spot, then he's gone. *Your move is safe with us.* I read every single letter. Then I see him again.

Do you remember how crazy you were about me? You could have had your pick, but you wanted me. The new girl. Just because I ignored you. That's the way it was, wasn't it? I ignored you and that got you interested. Was it sporting ambition? In the beginning? You can admit it. I can take it. I know it didn't stay that way.

Do you remember how hard you tried? You danced around me the way a crazy person dances around a pillar of salt. I was really stubborn. You tried one joke after another. And you laughed all the time. But all that laughing got on my nerves. And I certainly didn't feel like joining in.

I remember the precise moment when you got it. "You think I'm an idiot, don't you?" you asked.

We were standing at the vending machine and I picked a cup of soup, but it was so disgusting I spat it out straight away. At your feet.

"Yeah, that's how I feel about myself, too," you said.

That was the first time I laughed. The first time since I'd moved here. The first time in a long time.

And you thought the ice was broken, didn't you? That's the way you are. You think things are simple. But things didn't move that quickly. I said, "Sorry, but men are not exactly

top of my list right now, and don't bother trying to convince me otherwise."

I thought that had sent you packing. That's the way I am. I think people can be kept at arm's length. But you said something unbelievable. You said, "I will convince you otherwise."

And I thought, What an arse! What a prick! I didn't understand. But that's exactly what happened. You convinced me. Later.

At first you kept your distance. You realized that you had to leave me alone if you didn't want to spoil everything. You kept your eye on me from a distance. I could feel your eyes on my back. In class. During the break. Sometimes even when I was alone at home in bed. Whether I wanted it or not. And I didn't.

I had other things to do. Everything was new. I didn't know anybody. I had to settle in first. Understand how your school worked. Catch up on school stuff. Make friends with Susanne.

But then, one day, it was winter and it had snowed, I was standing with Susanne during the break, and suddenly something was missing. Behind me. I turned around. I looked everywhere. But you weren't there. And you weren't there the next day either. Or the next. I had a dull feeling in my chest. And I realised it was longing. I missed you and I didn't know why.

"Whatever happened to that, what was his name again?" I asked Susanne. I knew exactly what your name was.

"Rico?"

"Yeah, him."

"He's got permission to be on holiday."

"How come?"

"Because his dad donates money to the school. Rico's parents are quite rich." Susanne raised her eyebrows. "So you like him after all?"

"I don't know." I didn't know.

"Then make your mind up. He's back next week. He's somewhere in Africa. Charity work or something. His dad's the head doctor at a clinic for cosmetic surgery. He's been patching up disfigured children in Africa. Rico went along to film it. For his school project. Well, that was the official reason anyway. You can ask him when he gets back."

Ask him about Africa, that's not a bad idea, I thought. That way I could always claim I was interested in the disfigured children. Rather than in you.

"Oh fuck!" he shouts and jumps down from the driver's side of the lorry. He isn't old. He's got a moustache. And a tattoo on his upper arm. He runs past me. Stops. Groans.

"Oh, fuck! No. No. No."

Yes.

He kneels down. Stands up. Starts to turn around. Stops. Pulls a mobile phone out of his pocket. Dials.

"Come on, come on. Hello? I need an ambulance, er ... !" He turns around. Looks for something.

"Nussbaumweg." That's my voice.

"Nussbaumweg ... a boy."

My boy.

"I don't know. He's not moving."

He's asleep.

The mobile phone disappears back into his pocket. He turns around to me. "I didn't see him. He was walking in the other direction and then suddenly ... Did you witness it? Did you see what happened?"

Yes.

"I didn't stand a chance."

Not a chance.

"Why did he ..."

He wanted my arse.

"Oh fuck. It's not my fault. I ..."

I.

"But you saw it."

"Yes."

"And now? What do we do now?"

We.

I'm on the move. Left. Right. I can do it. I'm on the move.

That's what's happening.

"Recovery position? Oh God. How does that work again?"

"No, don't touch him."

He's asleep.

"Yeah, that's right, it's much too dangerous. Otherwise he'll have even more broken ... Oh fuck!"

Broken.

But there's no blood.

Everything's going to be OK.

Hush little baby, don't say a word.

Mama's gonna buy you a mockingbird.

If that looking glass gets broke.

"Rico."

"What? You know him?"

"Rico." I bend over him, put my cheek next to his nose.

"Rico. Are you OK? OK? Rico'll be fine. He'll be fine."

Just fine.

"Listen. The ambulance'll be here in a minute."

He's not breathing.

He's asleep.

He's not breathing.

He's asleep.

But he's not breathing.

"He's not breathing."

He bends over. "Oh, no, no. Please no. No, not that."

No.

"What's happened?" Another voice. "Should I ..."

"On its way. He came from nowhere. He just ran out in front of my bonnet. I couldn't do anything ..."

"Is he ... ? Oh God."

He's asleep, that's all.

Fuck, he's asleep, that's all!

"Why is it taking so long?"

Long.

Long.

Long.

"There. I can hear something."

"I can't."

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"Yes, there it is, a siren."

"Finally."

Finally.

He waves.

It's a snake winding itself around a tree.

Now I can see it. Maybe it's the snake from the Garden of Eden. He waves like mad until the ambulance comes to a stop next to us.

* End of sample translation*