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**My Maths Disaster – or the Long
Road to the First Kiss**
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Ulrike Rylance
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Sample Translation by Rachel Hildebrandt

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Mid-August

Welcome to Schiller High School!

Hopefully all old and new students had great summer vacations and are excited about the new school year. This year we want to say a big “Hello!” to our new school director, Ms. Rössler! We also want to welcome Mr. Offenbach, our new art teacher, and Kenneth White, our English language assistant.

Sadly, our dear school secretary, Ms. Müller, is taking some much-needed time off this year.

This year’s new clubs are: Felting, Drama Club, and Internet Security.

The “Class of the Month” contest is also starting, effective immediately. Until further notification, the library will remain closed.

© Lilly Lehmann, Class 7b

I wrote this.

Because starting today, I’m in charge of the student page on the school website. This morning my teacher caught me in the hallway and asked if I wanted to do this. Because I seem to write such good essays. I’m supposed to document online anything awesome that happens at our school. That’s the tricky part. The problem is: I can’t REALLY write about the TRULY AWESOME stuff that’s going on at our school.

For example, the thing with the library:

Somebody sprayed graffiti on the wall of the school library. WITH A PICTURE!!!! And although the janitor scrubbed it as hard as he could, it just won’t go away. That’s why nobody is allowed to go in there.

Or what happened with Ms. Müller, the secretary:

“Where is Müller actually, the old dragon?” our biology teacher quietly asked our music teacher in the staff lounge. I heard this quite clearly early this morning as I waited on my teacher, Ms. Wenz, to give me the password for the school website.

“Rehab,” the music teacher whispered back just as quietly. “She had a thing for red wine, lots of it.” Then the two of them snickered. That would have REALLY been something interesting for the website.

Last year, our beloved school secretary, Ms. Müller, enjoyed guzzling buckets of red wine in her office, and she is now recovering comfortably in a rehab clinic.



But grrrr... that won't fly. Or the parents will be climbing the school's walls. That's why from now on I'll have to secretly record on the side what really is happening. After all, the truth should not be concealed, so one more time:

Mid-August (for real!!!)

Seventh grade REALLY started off good for me. And also for my best friend Felicitas. Since she was able to sit behind Hendrik on the bus today.

"He looked SOOOOO cute as always, staring dreamily out the window," she told me. "You know how his hair falls in his eyes. And when he smiles, the saliva on his teeth always shimmers so mysteriously. Look, I took a picture."

All you could see on the photo was the back of a head covered with black hair, and it was pretty blurry at that. He actually looked more like a Russian fur hat.

"Really cute," I agreed with her, although personally I thought a Russian fur cap was a thousand times more interesting, intelligent, and entertaining than Hendrik. But Felicitas has been crazy about him since third grade, so that's that. She's my best friend after all, and just at that moment, the top drama queens Melle and Mara walked up, craning their necks to see the photo.

"So, Felicitas, that's your new boyfriend? Are you going out with a bear skin or what? You're perfect for each other, ha, ha!" Over the summer, they'd managed to become even dumber and more stuck up than before. Besides that, they now wore striped nail polish, and their eyes were lined so thickly they looked like pandas. And they were wearing such high-heeled shoes that when they ran, it sounded like a string of firecrackers. But their laughter was just as acidic as it had been last year. And then suddenly two STRANGE people walked into the classroom:

1. A funny-looking man with long hair and a beret and paint splatters on his arms, wearing a t-shirt inside out. All he did was poke his head in the room and call out, "Aha, Art Nouveau windows!" Then he was gone. A nut case?

2. Another funny-looking, younger guy with red hair in a black suit, white shirt and tie. At first, we thought somebody must have died and this was the undertaker who had come to pick up the body. But the undertaker just sat up front, as calm as could be, eating a bag of potato chips as he played with his phone. Strange. He also said something, which no one could understand. It sounded something like "Himynameskenneffite."

Himynameskenneffite simply wouldn't go away, but just sat there in front of us, and that was inconvenient since I actually wanted to tell Felicitas everything about Lukas Meyer, my crush from summer camp. But Himynameskenneffite just sat there like he was nailed to the seat, at least until our teacher, Ms. Wenz, walked in and informed him that he needed to be in the eighth-grade class and was in the wrong place. And she told us that this is our new English language assistant, Kenneth White. Ah, okay. He's supposed to teach us English. Not bury someone. Phew, close call.

Ms. Wenz then explained that we have a new school director named Ms. Rössler, and that, starting now, we're in the running for the title "Class of the Month." We can stay in the competition by doing things like voluntarily cleaning up the schoolyard. Of course, absolutely NOBODY wants to do that. In the schoolyard, there's such things as:

- used pieces of gum
- wadded-up, floppy-damp tissues



- cigarette butts
- squashed, rotten pieces of school bread
- scrunchies WITH strands of hair in them
- beat-up pairs of lonely gym shorts, and
- lots of moldy, mushy clumps of stuff that you don't really want to know what it is!!! Gag!
(Felicitas and I even found a condom there once!!! Ewwww!)

We had art for the next hour, and who should be standing there at the chalkboard, grinning in anticipation?
The crazy man from earlier!

The crazy man was our new art teacher, Mr. Offenbach!

First off, Mr. Offenbach wanted to know our names and write them down, but somehow this managed to take forever, because he kept forgetting the names as soon as he heard them.

“What’s your name again? Melle? Say it again. How do you write that? Two E’s, two L’s? How exactly?”

In the meantime, Felicitas had drawn two large hearts on the table - we were in art after all, so it was okay - and in one she wrote “Felicitas B. + Hendrik K. = forever!!!” and in the other “Lilly L. + ...”

“What’s the name of that boy from camp again?” she whispered at me. Unfortunately at the very moment that Mr. Offenbach pointed at the open chair to the left of mine and asked: “Who sits there?”

“Lukas Meyer,” I said quietly to Felicitas.

Yet Mr. Offenbach somehow managed to hear that. “Lukas Meyer, okay. Where is he today?”

And before I could even react, Felicitas cut in: “Lukas Meyer is still at summer camp.”

Then she giggled and poked me in the leg under the table. The others in class were giggling now, too, but Mr. Offenbach had not noticed a thing. He was just staring dreamily into nowhere.

“His name is Lukas, eh... Like Lucas Cranach, the most brilliant German painter of the Renaissance. I’m sure you’ve heard of him, right?”

After class, I wanted to go straight to Mr. Offenbach in order to tell him that there was no Lukas Meyer, but suddenly I saw HIM. The cutest boy in the world. He had such gorgeous brown eyes and a sweet smile and such a cool haircut, and he was not a dwarf like most of the seventh-grade boys and not as pathetic as they were, because he had just picked up a pencil that Emo-Annie had dropped and handed it back to her with: “Here you go!” Totally nice, right? And Emo-Annie had blinked at him through her jet black curtain of hair and SMILED! Emo-Annie never smiles! Never!!

“Who is that?” I asked Felicitas.

“The new boy from 7a,” Felicitas answered. “I think his name is Freddy.”

Freddy!

Unfortunately the bell rang at that moment, and I didn’t see Freddy any more. Crud. And the toilets in the girls’ restroom were all clogged, and this was only the first day of school! Betty Bauer from the tenth grade furiously ripped down the off-limits tape and yelled loudly: “What is this, some stinking JUVY HALL?!”

(Felicitas and I think Betty Bauer is SUPER COOL. She’s our idol. Sadly she’ll never know this because she never talks to us.)

Once the classes ended, the new clubs met for the first time (except for theater, which Mr. Offenbach was in charge of and which he somehow forgot about.) At least twenty people stood in line for “Internet Security” - all boys who want to be hackers.

“Felting with Ms. Unger,” our history teacher, was in the next room. She sat there lonely and alone in front of a mountain of yarn, like a shrivelled Sleeping Beauty lacking beauty sleep, and I felt so sorry for her that I



almost lost all self-control and went in to sign up for “Felting with Ms. Unger.” But Felicitas yanked me back at the last second.

“Are you nuts?”

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Early September

This year, the theater club is going to perform the play Twilight. Anyone interested in being involved should notify Mr. Offenbach by September 10.

The “Internet Security” club is full! “Felting” is unfortunately being canceled due to insufficient interest.

The biology field trip for all the seventh-grade classes to the birds’ paradise was a smashing success. We learned so many interesting things about the various representatives of the bird world, and we’ll never ever forget all the vultures, raptors and owls.

The Class of the Month for September is Class 6a. Congratulations!

The library will remain closed until further notification. The girls’ restroom on the first floor will remain closed until further notification.

© Lilly Lehmann, Class 7b

Early September (for real!!!)

The trip to the birds’ paradise really was unforgettable. But for completely different reasons. It started out well enough, because all the seventh-grade classes rode over there together. That included 7a = that included Freddy. Which is why I spent so much extra time on my hairstyle that day, and I got up an extra hour early in order to wash my hair. Grandpa was the only other one up at that time, because he was looking for his glasses. But despite the fact I used the Shine Activator Shampoo and the Brilliant Control Boost Conditioner and the Ultimate Mega Mousse with Extra Strong Hold for my hair, it still didn’t look any different than usual. But then I unfortunately didn’t have time to eat breakfast, so I just grabbed a yogurt from the fridge. At least I found Grandpa’s glasses, which were sitting in the butter compartment. Grandpa was happy and commented that now they felt cool on his skin, and he thought that was nice.

(And I was glad that Mom hadn’t seen this, otherwise she’d just have nagged Grandpa again about the fact that glasses don’t belong in the fridge.)

All of the seventh-grade classes were already standing around at the school, waiting on the bus and chatting with each other. Melle and Mara were wearing little feathers in their hair today. Because that’s in. But they actually looked a little dumb, like plucked chickens.

When they saw us, they started whispering again. They kept pointing and giggling at Felicitas’ new purple jacket. (It was unfortunately a little big, because Felicitas’ father had bought it in an Ebay auction.)

„Hey, Felicitas – is that a jacket or a one-man tent? Muahaha! OR a parachute? In case you fly away?”



Muahaha! Oh, that wouldn't happen, since you're much too heavy, muhahaha!"

"Just make sure they don't accidentally lock you up in a parrot cage in the bird park," was my response. A couple of people laughed, and Melle looked at us POISONOUSLY. And fired right back: "Oh yeah? You need to make sure that you're even allowed to get on the bus. Lilly's backpack is melting like old cheese, ha, ha."

Crud, crud, crud! I had been wondering the whole time what was so damp against my back. On the way over, the stupid jogurt had burst and had seeped through the fabric! So disgusting!

Melle and Mara laughed, high fived each other, and shook their feathers, while I cleaned my disgusting backpack with tissues the best I could. As a result, I was the last one on board and had no chance of sitting anywhere close to Freddy, so I had to sit with Felicitas way up front in the first row. Where you couldn't see anything that the other cool kids in the back were doing.

Felicitas was also in a bad mood, since Hendrik was sitting unbelievably far back, where he was smilingly, silently and attractively gazing out of the window. (Her words, not mine) Felicitas couldn't even take a photo of him, since somebody was constantly jostling into the picture!

Our teacher Ms. Wenz had checked to make sure that everyone was there, and then suddenly Mr. Offenbach showed up. A giant camera was hanging around his neck, and he was carrying a sketch pad, in order to draw the birds.

"Aaaaah, birds in art... So, which bird is the most famous heraldic animal?"

"Budgie? Flamingo? Penguin?"

"Uh, well. Eagle."

The boys then wanted to know if in the birds' paradise there were real birds of prey and if they could grab something relatively small, like for example Sven Hübner from our class, and carry it as food up to their nest? Mr. Offenbach didn't know the answer to that either.

There was an animal handler in the birds' paradise, who gave us a tour and explained the birds to us.

... and the silent flight of the owl, the swift and nimble hunt of the falcon, the flight characteristics of vultures, steppe eagles and bald eagles, and...

It was completely lame, and most of the birds just sat on the trees, bored, or they slept. Makes sense - they had already heard the man's lecture a thousand times.

[Thought bubble of irritated bird: